Barak: Conflict with Syria 'very probable'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Israel's top military chief considers another confrontation with Syria likely if peace negotiations remain stalled for long, according to an interview in a U.S. weekly newsmagazine. Lieutenant General Ehud Barak, chief of staff of the Israeli military, was quoted as saying in the Dec. 26 issue of U.S. News and World Report that "a long stalemate (in negotiations with Syria) makes another confrontation very probable. This doesn't mean that there is a timetable, or that nothing can be done, but in a historic sense, it starts a countdown. "You don't know if it will take place in two or five years; the nature of the confrontation is unknown, as is who else will be involved." Gen. Barak noted that Syria has 4,000 tanks, 700 warplanes and missiles such as Scud Bs and Cs and chemical weapons more advanced than Iraq's that could strike Israel. On the improvement in Israeli-Palestinian relations, Gen. Barak said that "so long as we reduce terror without damaging any of Israel's vital interests by smoothing relations with them, then it will be more difficult to motivate hostile acts against us from Benghazi (Libya) or Tehran."

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Mirai heads for Holland

AMMAN (Petra) — The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces, General Abdul Hafez Mirai, left Monday for the Netherlands where he is to take part in a conference by chiefs of armed forces participating in the U.N. peacekeeping forces around the world. Gen. Mirai will later visit the Jordanian peacekeeping troops stationed in Croatia and will meet with the commander of the U.N. peacekeeping forces in former Yugoslavia.

Palestinian lynch mob refused refuge

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestinian Authority refused to give refuge in the self-rule enclave of Jericho to four Palestinians who tried to lynch an Israeli soldier in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian witnesses said Monday. The four, all members of Yasser Arafat's Fateh movement, were later captured by Israeli soldiers in the occupied town of Ramallah. They were part of a mob who set upon a 41-year-old reserve soldier in Ramallah on Wednesday. The attempted lynching caused a huge outcry in Israel because it took place before reporters and press cameramen, who filmed Palestinians stabbing the soldier and battering him with stones as he pleaded for mercy. He suffered several wounds before an Israeli unit rescued him. The four Palestinians turned up at the security services headquarters in Jericho on Saturday to ask for refuge.

Israeli government defeats vote

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli government on Monday easily defeated a no-confidence motion called by rabbis in Israel's parliament in a row over the character of the biblical King David. Supporters of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Labour-led coalition beat the motion by 56 to 41 votes. Ultra-religious Knesset members forced the vote when Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said last week that King David may have acted immorally 3,000 years ago when he slept with the wife of one of his warriors and sent the husband to die in battle. "Not everything King David did on the ground and on the rooftops seems to me to be Jewish or appeals to me," Mr. Peres said to launch the storm.

Turkey says top rebel killed

TUNCELI, Turkey (R) — Turkish security forces said on Monday they had killed a top Kurdish guerrilla and that another, hiding in a steep ravine, was expected to fall soon into their hands in the rugged and snowy province of Tunceli. "We've killed a top PKK (Kurdish Labour Party) commander," a military official said. "Now we just have (regional commander) Semdin Sakik left — he won't escape now." Mr. Sakik — nicknamed "Fingerless Zeki" after losing a thumb while firing a rocket in northern Iraq — commands the region and leads some eight to 10 provincial chiefs.

Czechs seize high-grade uranium

PRAGUE (R) — Czech police have made a major seizure of what they believe is weapons-grade uranium and detained three people including a local nuclear physicist, the Interior Ministry said on Monday. Ministry spokesman Jan Subert said Czech experts were still running tests on the almsot three kilogrammes of radioactive material, which was seized in Prague last Wednesday.

Russians drop bombs, advance towards Grozny

Dudayev's conditional acceptance of talks fails to convince Moscow

GROZNY, Russia (Agencies) — Russian warplanes dropped four bombs Monday evening on the Chechen capital, flying low over the centre of Grozny, correspondents reported.

Four loud explosions were heard in the city and Chechen separatists fired at the planes, which also dropped flares. None of the aircraft were apparently struck.

The precise spots where the bombs fell could not immediately be determined, but it was the first time explosions rocked the city so close to the residence of the president of the breakaway republic, Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Since Sunday night, Russian forces have stepped up attacks around Grozny and against "strategic targets" such as the television tower and the electricity supply network.

The Russian security council, after meeting on Monday, announced that it aimed to "liquidate" the "illegal" armed groups in Chechenya, the term used in Moscow for General Dudayev's forces.

Russian troops advanced to within a few kilometres of Grozny on Monday after taking a village in the northeast, reporters said.

They said Russian troops had taken the village of Petropavlovskaya, about 10 kilometres from Grozny, and had rolled Chechen forces back to the edge of the city.

Reuter correspondent Lawrence Sheets, in Grozny, said there were intense artillery exchanges between the Russians and Chechen separatist fighters as Moscow's troops moved towards the Chechen capital.

"The Russians appear to have advanced very rapidly on the town from the northeast and are now very close to the edge of the town from that side," Mr. Sheets said.

Earlier in the day Russians and Chechens fought fierce battles around the settlement of Dolinskoye, 35 kilometres to the northwest, with the Russians using helicopter gunships, Grad rockets and artillery.

Mr. Dudayev, a former Soviet air force general, on Sunday ruled out talks outside Chechenya in southern Russia. A Kremlin official late dismissed Mr. Dudayev's offer by telegram to negotiate if a Russian envoy was sent to Grozny.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin's chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, said Grozny was to be totally surrounded by Russian forces by the end of the day.

A top-level meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, ended with a decision to "intensify steps towards liquidating and disarming illegal armed groups," according to a communique carried by ITAR-TASS.

Russian commanders have said they do not plan to storm Grozny, which military experts say would be a costly operation. But Russian airpower clearly aimed to choke the city's resistance.

The city's television tower was attacked several times during the night, but still transmitted on Monday. The electricity line serving Grozny was also attacked, but functioned Monday. Many shell craters could be seen near pylons, which just escaped damage.

Fresh water reservoirs about four kilometres southeast of Grozny were also bombed.

Russian soldiers were seen moving in from the north, after crossing the Sunja river on Monday. They were shelling Chechen positions with heavy artillery.

The Russians have been told to seal the road leading south from Grozny which had been left open to enable people to flee, Interfax news agency reported.

Towards 4:30 p.m. (1330 GMT), they had reached the northern outskirts of Grozny and Chechen forces were seen falling back.

There were "very heavy" casualties among the civilian population, according to a Chechen military officer, who declined to give his name.

Advancing Russians were "firing on all vehicles," the officer said.

(Continued on page 7)

'Volunteers signing up,' page 12

Santa Claus goes around handing out sweets in snow-clad Amman on Monday (Yousef Allan)

Cold wave predicted to abate by noon today

AMMAN (J.T.) — The snowstorm and high winds which lashed most parts of Jordan on Monday will abate by Tuesday noon with scattered rains, the Meteorology Department said.

A department said heavy snow fell Monday on areas over 800 metres in altitude.

Snowfall would continue overnight, tapering off in the morning and end by noon, the spokesman said.

He said that the temperatures remained under 5° Centigrade on Monday and would rise to 7°C on Tuesday, but will drop to around zero degrees at night, causing the formation of frost.

The weather will improve on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday when no rain or snow is expected, he added.

The Civil Defence Department said that low-lying areas in Amman and other governorates were inundated by Monday's rains and snow, and most roads around Ajloun in the north, Tafileh and Shobak in the south were closed.

More than 32 millimetres of rain fell in western Amman, 35 millimetres in Balqa, and 43 millimetres in the Ajloun area in the 24 hours before 8 a.m. Monday, said the department in a statement.

The Council of the Jordanian Contractors Association announced it had set up four emergency teams to work around the clock and provide assistance in emergency cases.

The teams are supplied with road clearing equipment and are operating in Amman, Irbid, Karak and Tafileh. The teams can be contacted on Amman telephone numbers 838931 and 838675.

Civil Defence Department (CDD) teams were clearing blocked roads around the country in cooperation with local municipal councils.

The latest rains and snow raised to 52.5 million cubic metres the level of water in the King Talal Dam reservoir, the largest in the country with an 80 million-cubic-metre capacity, according to officials.

The Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO) said meanwhile that the number of farmers receiving grain seeds grew in 1994 as a result of the early rains.

So far, 2,720 tonnes of improved strains of wheat and 1,283 tonnes of improved strains of barley were distributed to farmers affiliated to the cooperative organisations by the middle of December, JCO Projects Department Director Issam Qarara'a said.

U.S. accuses Iran of aiding Iraq bust sanctions

DUBAI (Agencies) — The U.S. Navy has over the last three weeks diverted four vessels that were almost certainly violating the U.N. embargo on Iraqi exports, a U.S. government spokesman in the Gulf region said on Monday.

The news came as the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) revealed that the United States has sent a strongly worded letter to the U.N. Security Council's Sanctions Committee complaining of Iranian complicity in Iraqi embargo violations.

"We request that the committee take immediate action to end such smuggling," the letter said.

The spokesman said the U.S. navy, operating in the Gulf, boarded the cargo vessel Ajmer, with the flag of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a few days ago and found a cargo of dates.

"We have substantial evidence she loaded her cargo in Iraq," the government spokesman said.

All exports are banned under the U.N. sanctions imposed on Baghdad for invading Kuwait in 1990.

On Nov. 30 the U.S. Navy diverted three tugs, each of whose masters admitted to loading oil in Iraq, he added, naming the vessels as the Tasman Bay, C.E. Stefanos and the Master Gulf.

Each had oil in converted water tanks or were accompanied by a barge carrying oil.

Some of the vessels travelled to Iranian ports and offloaded the oil to other vessels or Iranian onshore facilities. Others sailed directly to other Gulf ports, the letter said.

Oil experts said the amounts involved were small — around 10,000 to 20,000 barrels per day (b/d).

Iraq currently produces 540,000 b/d, compared with the 3.2 million it produced prior to the embargo.

A shipping source said he was informed that the Master Gulf, also flying the UAE flag, was turned over to UAE authorities in Abu Dhabi on Monday morning. Two other vessels had been detained in October with what the navy said was Iraqi diesel.

The U.S. letter to the Sanctions Committee said this kind of activity was being conducted with Iranian help.

"My government regrets to inform you ... of evidence of Iranian complicity in the smuggling of Iraqi petroleum through Persian Gulf ports in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions prohibiting such trade," it read.

"Iranian complicity in this smuggling undermines the international community's efforts to compel Iraqi compliance with its obligations under various Security Council resolutions."

MEES said the Dec. 7 letter, scheduled for discussion at the committee's Feb. 16 meeting in New York, may indicate Washington's desire to head off Russian-Iraqi moves to obtain a suspension of the oil sanctions early next year.

"In any case, it represents further evidence of the Clinton administration's tough line as regards both Iraq and Iran," it said.

Perhaps the biggest issue now confronting the oil market is the question of when Iraq will be allowed back, with its potential of two to three million barrels per day of exports.

Many analysts believe it is unlikely in 1995 but they say pressure from Russia and to a lesser extent France could conceivably change that. Washington nonetheless has veto power.

The U.S. letter continued: "My government further requests that the committee, through its chairman, call on the government of Iran to cease and desist from violating the U.N. sanctions regime and to report back to the committee within 30 days on measures it has taken to prevent such violations in the future."

The government spokesman confirmed the MEES report, which said refined products are loaded at Iraqi ports like Basra or Khor Al Zubayr onto small vessels, which then get Iranian shipping documents falsely identifying the products as Iranian.

"The U.S. Navy has provided incontrovertible evidence that some of the Iranian paperwork was absolutely false," the spokesman said, adding it was possible to prove in some cases that vessels were not where their paperwork said they were.

In October, U.S. warships, part of the allied naval force enforcing the embargo, intercepted two tankers — one Greek and one Honduran-flagged — in the northern Gulf on suspicion of smuggling Iraqi oil. One of the captains admitted loading at Al Zubair.

Paris denies report

France confirmed on Monday it was holding talks with Iraq about easing or lifting the sanctions but denied it had agreed coordinated action on the issue with Baghdad.

A foreign ministry spokesman told reporters French officials and visiting Iraqi Foreign Under-Secretary Riyad Al Qeisi discussed Baghdad's compliance with U.N. resolutions on Friday.

Iraqi newspapers at the weekend quoted Mr. Qeisi as saying: "The two sides agreed to continue work at the Security Council in line with a coordinated plan with specific steps."

The French spokesman said: "There is no coordinated plan but we do want Iraq to respect U.N. resolutions and we do want the sanctions to be lifted as a result."

"We discussed the points holding up the lifting of sanctions including issues dealing with Iraqi arms policies, human rights issues, the rights of minorities in Iraq and the question of missing Kuwaitis," he said.

Former French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson told a news conference in Baghdad at the weekend that the sanctions should now be eased.

Asked whether France backed an easing of the oil embargo merely for economic interests, he replied:

(Continued on page 7)

2 Israeli soldiers killed in S. Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (Agencies) — Two Israeli soldiers were killed and at least three wounded in guerrilla attacks in southern Lebanon on Monday, security officials said.

Guerrillas set off a remote-control bomb as an Israeli patrol drove beween Tiri and the village of Haddatha, on the edge of Israel's "security zone," killing one soldier and wounding two others, they said.

The officials said five mortars also crashed into an Israeli position in nearby Mhaybib, but they were unable to give a toll. The assailants were believed to be Palestinian.

The Hizbollah group claimed an earlier rocket and machine-gun attack which killed another Israeli soldier and wounded one more at a position in Tallussa, in the central sector of the "security zone."

Israeli troops and their proxy militia retaliated by pounding Hizbollah positions in South Lebanon while Israeli warplanes buzzed the region, the officials said.

The Israeli army, which delays the announcement of casualties to allow time to inform their families, confirmed the death in the first attack on Monday.

Last week the Israeli army and Hizbollah guerrillas went on alert after the Shiite fighters stepped up attacks on Israeli soldiers.

Four Israeli soldiers have been killed in South Lebanon this month.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres blamed Syria for Monday's missile attack.

"The Syrians have a capacity to prevent Hizbollah from this sort of action ... I think Syria should be addressed with this responsibility," Mr. Peres said, adding that Israel views the escalation on the Lebanese front "very seriously."

GCC summit opens amid tight security

BAHRAIN (Agencies) — The leaders of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) opened a summit here on Monday amid tight security and a call for more solidarity between the oil-rich Arab states of the region.

The emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Ben Salman Al Khalifa, warned of "the challenges to the region's security and stability."

The GCC should "eliminate the causes of dissension within its ranks and reinforce the links of solidarity between its members," the leader of the host country said in the opening address.

The 15th summit of the GCC — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — is to focus mainly on defence and border disputes.

The leaders were meeting in the Meridien Hotel on a peninsula facing the Bahraini capital of Manama amid massive security following clashes between Shiite demonstrators and police.

The sector was sealed off and the international fairground near the hotel turned into barracks for the security forces.

The weekend violence left nine people dead according to the opposition, and one according to the interior ministry.

Among the 19 points on their agenda, Gulf leaders are to study plans to boost their joint Peninsula Shield Force from the current 4,000 troops to 25,000 men during the three-day summit.

The symbolic Saudi-based force created in 1984 was unable to prevent Iraqi forces invading Kuwait in August 1990.

They will also discuss setting up an airborne early warning system, which would involve buying three or four AWACS planes for a cost of between $3 to $5 billion.

Western diplomats say the plans were running up against the financial difficulties facing the Gulf states because of a fall in oil prices.

The monarchs will also discuss border disputes which have damaged their relations.

Border wrangles have pitted Qatar against both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

There is also a dispute between Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE.

In the economic sphere, the GCC is trying to implement a 1983 cooperation accord which envisaged a Gulf common market.

Other topics will be relations between Iran and Iraq, the peace process, and plans for a regional development bank which were raised at a Middle East economic summit in the Moroccan city of Casablanca in October.

Dozens of armoured vehicles equipped with machine-guns closed off a 10-kilometre stretch of road leading to the Meridien hotel.

"The clashes seem to have been contained in Manama on Monday evening, but armoured vehicles full of special intervention forces were posted near strategic points in the town," said a witness contacted by AFP.

"Armoured vehicles and lorries with police armed with assault rifles, truncheons and tear-gas were posted around Shiite districts in Manama and other villages," the witness added.

Security forces shot dead five demonstrators and four policemen also died in riots, which peaked over the weekend, the banned opposition Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) told AFP in Tehran.

The Bahraini Interior Ministry said Sunday just one policeman had been killed in the violence, which erupted after the arrest of Shiite cleric Sheikh Ali Salman on Dec. 5.

Government sources insist that the unrest remains limited and confined mainly to a few villages and some older, crowded districts of Manama.

The witnesses said a clergy-

(Continued on page 7)

Weizman in Egypt

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman, paying his first official visit to Egypt, held talks with President Hosni Mubarak on Monday and visited the tomb of Mr. Mubarak's murdered predecessor, Anwar Sadat.

The two heads of state held preliminary talks in the morning and another session in the afternoon.

At the tomb of Mr. Sadat, who incurred the wrath of the Arab World by making peace with Israel and was assassinated by a Muslim militant in 1981, Mr. Weizman laid a wreath and bowed his head in silence for a few seconds before driving away to visit a synagogue.

Arye Shumer, director-general of Mr. Weizman's office, told Israel radio that Mr. Weizman, whose three-day visit is an effort to warm up relations, hoped to persuade Mr. Mubarak to make good on a promise to pay his first visit to Israel.

Asked when Mr. Mubarak would visit, Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters: "I cannot speak for the president. It's a question of when and how. He has said before he is ready to go."

Egyptian newspapers said Mr. Mubarak and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad conferred by telephone on Sunday and "exchanged views on the latest Middle East developments" on the eve of Mr. Weizman's visit.

Syria's ambassador to Cairo, Issa Darwish, said he would stay away from all functions involving Mr. Weizman because the Jewish state remained an occupier and an aggressor in the eyes of Damascus.

"We're still in a state of war with Israel and Israel is still occupying our land by force. Israel is still an aggressor ... and a person cannot be dragged to welcome an aggressor and a usurper who is ruling his land by the gun," Mr. Darwish told Reuters.

"How can I shake hands with him (Weizman) while

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan, Mozambique discuss relations, cooperation in health

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Health Minister Aref Batayneh on Monday held talks with Pascal Manuel, prime minister of Mozambique, on Jordanian-Mozambican relations.

The Mozambican premier said later that his country was seeking to promote cooperation with Jordan in health affairs.

Dr. Manuel is currently on a visit to Jordan to take part in a health services conference organised by the Jordan University of Science and Technology in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Majali said that Jordan sought to build strong ties will all African nations. Dr. Manuel said Mozambique would be interested in benefitting from Jordan's experiences in health services.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Health Minister Aref Batayneh on Monday meet with Mozambican Premier Pascal Manuel (Petra photo)

Arafat faces litmus test

By Barry Parker
Agence France Press

GAZA CITY — From the rotting refugee camps to the swank sea-front villas, rumblings of unrest are growing as Yasser Arafat's autocratic ways collide with the high aspirations of his Palestinian people.

The momentous events of 1994 — Israeli military withdrawal in May, the arrival of armed Palestinian police and Arafat's triumphant return — soured only too quickly.

And the blame has been laid firmly at the door of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman.

Mr. Arafat's transformation from legendary guerrilla leader to chief administrator of the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho has proved painful.

Deepening poverty and unemployed remain most people's daily lot, bolstering opposition, both Islamic and secular, to his autonomous Palestinian Authority.

In November, amid a rising tide of Islamic terror against Israel and dashed expectations of massive foreign aid, the challenge to Mr. Arafat's personal sway erupted in bloodshed.

Fifteen died as his police opened fire on Muslim militants in Gaza City, fuelling fears of civil war.

Now, with a precarious calm on Gaza's streets, the new year holds make-or-break prospects for the 65-year-old.

Under the next stage of the declaration of principles for self-rule, Israel must redeploy troops outside urban centres on the West Bank by the eve of autonomy elections.

But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has balked at a pull-back for fear of exposing the 120,000 Jewish settlers to attack.

To legitimise his rule, Mr. Arafat, a veteran "Houdini" of countless impossible situations, desperately needs early redeployment and general elections.

They would not only boost flagging Palestinian belief in the peace process but also provide him with some credentials as a democrat.

"Dictator" is a description which comes more readily to lips of the Palestinian opposition.

"I don't think Arafat believes in the role of institutions," said Ghazi Abu Jiyab, a senior figure in Gaza with George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

"He seems to think he can do everything himself. I think he believes in a similar way to a dictator."

Abu Jiyab and others heard the accusations of corruption, watched with dismay the arrests without trial, the campaign of press intimidation and the refusal to delegate power, even to many of Mr. Arafat's own ministers.

"Everyone talks about democracy here but you have to prove you support democracy by acts," Abu Jiyab said.

"If things go on as now I expect a catastrophe. People will rebel, especially in Gaza, you can see the conditions."

At the Gaza headquarters of Mr. Arafat's Fateh movement such bluntness would be unthinkable, but the unease is palpable.

"1994 was a good start, it opened a new chapter between Israel and the Palestinians," said Diab Al Loh, Fateh spokesman. "But it has not fulfilled the hopes of the Palestinian people.

"The arrival of Arafat and the police was a big thing, but the problem now is not security.

"If Arafat has 20,000 police that will not solve the problems between the authority and the opposition. Direct dialogue and the implementation of the autonomy agreement can do that.

"We have to build a strong economy and that will solve 80 per cent of the problems. Free elections will solve most of the rest. Elections are the key to success.

"It will be the first step on the way to Palestinian democracy."

He bristled at criticism of Mr. Arafat saying: "We cannot move from occupation to democracy in a few months."

But Mr. Loh warned: "There is a danger of an explosion if Israel does not implement the Oslo agreement."

The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, which spearheads the armed struggle against occupation and opposition to Arafat, scoffs at elections to a council with limited power.

"The future is very dark," said Hamas leader Imad Faluji.

UNIFIL awaits peace in S. Lebanon

TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — Sixteen years ago Timur Goksel arrived here with U.N. peacekeepers as part of an interim force deployed in South Lebanon after an Israeli invasion in 1978. He is still waiting to go home.

"It's been a long interim," the 51-year-old Turk, who has been spokesman for the U.N. peacekeepers since 1978, told AFP.

The U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has lost more than 200 soldiers since it was first deployed most caught in the cross fire in South Lebanon with Israel on one side and anti-Israeli guerrillas on the other.

At times Israel's proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), as well as anti-Israeli guerrillas have intentionally targetted the force. Other soldiers have been killed accidentally.

But over the years they have managed to walk a delicate tightrope to become accepted by both sides.

"We act as an informal conflict-control mechanism and try to restrain both sides," Mr. Goksel said.

But he admitted the U.N. peacekeepers were powerless in face of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

"When you have 90,000 guys coming across, you either fight or watch."

Many believed after the 1982 invasion UNIFIL would be packed off home, but "the Security Council decided we should stay to play a role when peace comes."

That was 14 years ago now. "We're still waiting," Mr. Goksel said resignedly.

The nine-nation force of 5,247 peacekeepers from Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, Norway, and Poland generally has its mandate renewed every six months.

The forces survives on a "shoe-string budget" of $120 million annually. "That is equivalent to two months for Somalia," Mr. Goksel said.

There have been suggestions that UNIFIL could play a key role in the transition period in any peace settlement between Israel and Lebanon, although talks have made no progress since they were launched in Madrid in 1991.

But Mr. Goksel has doubts. "It sounds very feasible but no one has really defined what our role could be."

UNIFIL covers an area of 675 square kilometres in the central and western sectors of South Lebanon inhabited by around 400,000 people.

Soldiers from Senegal, Sweden, Nigeria, Holland, Canada and Iran once served in UNIFIL but have left the force, mostly for financial reasons, while Tehran evacuated its troops after the fall of the Shah in 1979.

Most troops live in prefabricated houses either overlooking the Mediterranean Sea at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura on the border with Israel or in several other locations inland and on the coast.

But they have made themselves at home in 16 years. So much so that about 54 soldiers have married local girls. "The most marrying battalion is the Norwegian closely followed by the French," Mr. Goksel joked.

"The Lebanese are still Phoenicians at heart. They're businessmen, they have no suspicion of foreigners and they are very friendly with UNIFIL troops," he added.

Algerian Berbers on war footing

IGOUJDAL (AFP) — Several dozen armed men keep watch day and night at this village in Algeria's "Switzerland," where the Berbers have got caught up in the Islamic fundamentalist war wracking the rest of the country.

All males over 17 in the 800-strong population have been mobilised. Armed with hunting rifles and machine-pistols, they man roughly-made roadblocks of stones and tree-trunks amid the crags and winding moutnain tracks.

The shepherds and smallholders carry weapons when they tend their flocks and fields.

Some 175 kilometres east of the capital Algiers, this village is just one among thousands scattered through the massifs of the Great and Little Kabylie up from the Mediterranean to the Setif plateau.

They have acted as mountain retreats where Berber ways of village life persist, with the populace of peasants and government employees constantly urging the central authorities to give their Berber language, Tamazight, official status alongside Arabic.

The Berbers, the original inhabitants of the Maghreb, are Muslim, but by and large have no truck with the radical views enforced at gunpoint by the Islamic militants who have infiltrated Berberland's mountains and thick forests.

There are 729 mosques for the 1.2 million population of Tizi-Ouzou, the administrative region encompassing the villages.

Visitors need permission from the djemaa, or village assembly, to enter Igoujdal.

The elders have been organising self-defence ever since the day Islamic gunmen turned up some months ago and opened fire with a heavy machine-gun. The villagers drove them off, killing two.

"They came to take our weapons, but we refused such humiliation," said Mohand. "If we are disarmed, they will come back afterwards to take our women and make them work for their underground gangs."

His companion Akli remembered, "We used to see them walking around or driving by. We do not understand why we were attacked, we are not involved in politics."

Since the attack, the village has lived in fear of reprisals. They know there are fundamentalists hidden in the forest a dozen kilometres away.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Suspected militants kill guard in S. Egypt

ASSIUT (R) — Suspected Muslim militants shot dead a police guard outside his house in southern Egypt, security sources said on Monday. They said unidentified gunmen killed Ezzat Aziz Mikhail as he sat outside his home in the village of Al Idara, near the town of Mallawi. The gunmen stole his rifle before fleeing. The sources said they believed the attack was by the militant Gamaa Al Islamiyah (Islamic Group), fighting to overthrow the government of President Hosni Mubarak, which has been particularly active around Mallawi since October. On average nearly one person has been killed every day in clashes between police and militants near Mallawi in the last two months. More than 530 people have been killed in militant-related violence in Egypt since March 1992 when the Gamaa started its campaign of violence against the Egyptian government.

Israelis stop Rajoub from entering Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli police Sunday for the first time prevented Palestinian security chief Jibril Rajoub from entering Arab East Jerusalem, forcing him to return to the self-rule enclave of Jericho, state radio reported. Israeli security officials had asked the police to let Mr. Rajoub stay in Beit Hanina, a suburb of East Jerusalem, to maintain good relations with their Palestinian counterparts. Mr. Rajoub, who normally lives in the West Bank town of Jericho, sometimes stays in Beit Hanina although he does not have a "residence permit" for East Jerusalem. But when Mr. Rajoub, accompanied by two bodyguards, arrived at a roadblock on the edge of Beit Hanina early Sunday, police ordered him to go back to Jericho, the radio said. They said Mr. Rajoub was trying to extend his activities to East Jerusalem. Police refused to comment on the incident.

Over 72 refugees from south return to Yemen

SANAA (AFP) — Seventy-two southern Yemenis who fled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the May-July civil war returned here Sunday, officials said. The group included civilians and military personnel. According to the authorities, nearly 7,000 Yemeni refugees have returned since the beginning of August, in line with an amnesty declared by President Ali Abdullah Saleh during the war. Some 10,000 southerners fled to neighbouring Gulf states after northern troops loyal to Mr. Saleh defeated the breakaway southern forces. Yemeni police Sunday confirmed the arrest of a member of the opposition Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), Amin Ahmad Qassem. A police spokesman quoted by the official news agency SABA said Mr. Qassem was "arrested for having received funds from suspect foreign elements and investing them illegally." Mr. Qassem would be put on trial after questioning, he added.

Qatar eases entry rules for Kuwaitis

DOHA (AFP) — Kuwaiti citizens will be able to enter Qatar simply by showing their identity cards at the border from Monday, the official agency QNA reported here Sunday. A senior immigration official quoted by QNA said the measure would mean Kuwaitis would have the same treatment as Qataris at the border. QNA did not say whether Kuwait would take reciprocal steps for Qatars. Qatar is the third member of the Gulf Cooperation Council to ease entry rules for citizens of another GCC country. Heads of state of the GCC, which groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, began a three-day summit meeting in Bahrain on Monday.

Sudan says Mubarak, Bashir to meet

KHARTOUM (AP) — The leaders of Sudan and Egypt, at loggerheads over a border dispute and terrorism sponsoring charges, will meet. Foreign Minister Hussein Abu Saleh was quoted as saying Monday. Mr. Abu Saleh said that Omar Hassan Al Bashir of Sudan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt have agreed to a summit meeting and that officials will "fix the date of the summit in the upcoming few days." He did not say where the summit meeting might take place. Egyptian officials declined to respond to Abu Saleh's comments which were reported in the daily Akhbar Al Yom newspaper.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:00 ..... Pollaurds
17:30 ..... Un Pour Tous
18:00 ..... Embarquement Porte I
18:30 ..... Le Intrepides
19:00 ..... News in French
19:45 ..... Varities
19:30 .... F.B.I. The Untold Stories
20:00 ..... Guide to the Universe
20:30 ..... Quantum Leap
21:10 ..... Cracking The Code
22:00 ..... News in English
22:20 ..... First Circle

PRAYER TIMES

05:03 ..... Fajr
06:26 ..... (Sunrise) Duha
11:33 ..... Dhuhr
14:17 ..... 'Asr
16:40 ..... Maghreb
18:02 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Cold weather conditions will continue with rainfall expected in all regions of the Kingdom. Snow is expected to fall over mountainous areas with skies cloudy and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with winds northerly and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	0/5
Aqaba	8 / 16
Deserts	3 / 9
Jordan Valley	7 / 14

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 4, Aqaba 17. Humidity readings: Amman 98 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhles Halasa 819220
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 885446
Dr. Shabanch Al Izzeh 753774
Dr. Shtaiwi Abu Zayed 737962
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairouih pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Mohammad Al Khalili 273099
Alquds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Hisham Hyasat 982440
Khilifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 686100
Amal Hospital 674155

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital ..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital ..... (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ..... (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital ..... (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:30 ..... Damascus (RJ)
09:15 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:55 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:55 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:35 ..... London (RJ)
16:45 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
16:50 ..... Cairo (RJ)
17:30 ... Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:20 ..... Vienna (OS)
17:05 ..... Rome (AZ)
20:00 ..... Aden (IY)
20:20 ..... Beirut (ME)
23:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
23:50 ..... Bucharest (RO)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:00 ..... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:30 ..... Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
11:35 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
11:55 ..... Paris (RJ)
12:00 ..... London (RJ)
12:20 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
12:45 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:05 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
20:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
21:25 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:10 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:45 ..... Damascus, Paris (AF)
10:15 ..... Larnaca, Rome (AZ)
13:50 ..... Vienna (OS)
14:00 ..... Khartoum (SD)
18:05 ..... Damascus (AZ)
21:00 ..... Aden (IY)
00:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
00:50 ..... Bucharest (RO)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman .. 8:00 a.m every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m every Sunday
Arr. Amman .. 5:00 p.m every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/500
Banana	680
Banana (Mukammar)	620
Cabbage	200/120
Carrot	280/180
Cauliflower	440/300
Clementine	340/200
Cucumbers (large)	300/200
Cucumbers (small)	600/400
Eggplant	340/220
Garlic	550/400
Grape Fruit	250/180
Lemon	280/180
Marrow (large)	280/180
Marrow (small)	500/300
Onion (green)	320/200
Onion (dry)	400/300
Orange	500/300
Pepper (hot)	500/300
Pepper (sweet)	500/300
Potato	300/250
Radish	280/150
Spinach	320/200
String Beans	900/600
Tomato	400/250

Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Monday chairs a panel to discuss law amendments that would advance the status of women in the country (Petra photo)

Princess Basma chairs panel to discuss law amendments

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Monday chaired a meeting at her office of the National Committee on Women's Affairs attended by a group of Jordanian lawyers.

Discussion covered law amendments aimed at removing barriers to women's participation in public life.

The meeting, which was also attended by Labour Minister Khaled Ghzawi and representatives of the Executive Council of the Federation of Jordanian Labour Unions and the Social Security Corporation (SSC), was convened in line with a strategy charted by the National Committee on Women's Affairs to help promote women's status and their role in society.

At the meeting, a general review was made of the draft amendments to the labour law which has been submitted to the Lower House of Parliament, with provisions affecting the status of women.

The group of lawyers who has been collaborating with the national committee and advising on legal matters included Taher Hikmat, Basel Bustami, Asma Khader, Taghreed Habashneh, Saoudeh Salem, and Rihab Al Qadoumi.

A statement after the meeting said that the lawyers were in the process of re-examining proposed amendments to the labour law before discussing them with the Judiciary Committee of the Lower House which has been entrusted with examining the draft law before referring it to the House.

Cuba, Jordan sign cooperation agreement

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Cuba Monday signed an agreement on economic, technical and scientific cooperation, paving the way for stronger bilateral relations.

The agreement also provides for trade exchanges and cooperation between the private sectors of both countries.

Under the terms of the document, the two sides pledge to create the appropriate climate for joint ventures and to set up a joint committee to follow up on the implementation of the agreement.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan and visiting Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Gonzales signed the agreement at a ceremony held at the foreign ministry.

The agreement followed a several-day visit to Jordan by the Cuban minister, which culminated Monday in a closed meeting with Mr. Hassan before the signing of the agreement.

Mr. Gonzales extended an invitation to Jordan to send an economic delegation to visit Cuba and pursue discussion in areas of bilateral cooperation, especially in matters related to Jordanian exports of phosphate and potash to the Caribbean country in exchange for sugar imports.

Before the signing at the foreign ministry, Mr. Gonzales met with Minister of Industry and Trade Rima Khalaf and discussed economic and trade relations.

Mr. Gonzales extended an invitation to Dr. Khalaf to visit Cuba and they agreed to set a date for the visit soon.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan and visiting Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Gonzales Monday sign an agreement on cooperation in various fields (Petra photo)

Boiler explosion rocks chocolate factory

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An explosion at a chocolate factory Sunday near Queen Alia International Airport caused material damage but no casualties, according to Public Security Department (PSD) and Civil Defence Department (CDD) reports.

According to the PSD report, the explosion, which occurred at noon, rocked the surrounding area and "its strong impact caused windows to shatter in nearby buildings."

"The strong explosion also caused a brick wall surrounding the chocolate factory building to fall on two cars parked beside it," a CDD official told the Jordan Times Monday.

The PSD report said that the Venus Chocolate Factory owner, who was not identified, told police that he was sitting in his office inside the factory when he heard a loud explosion.

When the owner went to check the matter, the report said, he saw the boilers in the factory burning.

Preliminary investigations by the PSD and CDD said the explosion was caused by calcium deposits that clogged the pipes of the boiler "causing pressure to build up and resulting in the massive explosion."

A CDD official told the Jordan Times that part of the factory was totally ruined.

He estimated the factory losses at more than JD 85,000.

According to the official, the boiler cost JD50,000, and chocolate ingredients lost were valued at JD30,000.

The official said "the boiler was not well maintained by the factory."

Bus accident death toll rises

The death toll of Saturday's accident on the Irbid-Mafraq road has risen to four, PSD reports said Monday.

Harol Nawaf, 32, died in Mafraq Government Hospital as a result of injuries sustained in the road collision between a bus that was carrying 58 passengers, mostly military personnel, and a trailer hauling cement.

The accident, which occurred near Muthalath Al Mansourah, also, resulted in the injury of more than 35 persons.

Jordanian-Israeli panels to meet in 2 weeks — Mulki

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanian and Israeli subcommittees working on water, transport, tourism, health, telecommunications and economic relations in implementation of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty are expected to hold a meeting within the next two weeks to review their respective missions, according to Hani Mulki, head of the Jordanian side of the joint follow-up committee.

Following a preliminary meeting Monday of the Jordanian-Israeli committee at the Sheikh Hussein Bridge area on the Israeli side, Dr. Mulki also announced that on Jan. 3 specialised negotiating committees as well as the joint follow-up committee would meet at Deir Alla.

According to Dr. Mulki, who is President of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), the joint committee Monday reviewed progress achieved by the sub-committees which met at the Dead Sea region and Deir Alla last week and studied the work of the subcommittee on the territories and border issues.

He said the border and territories committee have finalised work on 95 out of 115 points on the agenda.

The joint follow-up committee, Dr. Mulki added, reviewed the work of the subcommittee on water, which met at Wadi Araba to explore the existence of artesian wells and provide data related to water resources.

He said the joint follow-up committee also reviewed the work of the sub-committees on economic cooperation, the environment, energy, agriculture, transport and the Aqaba-Eilat plans.

The Jordanian team includes team coordinator Ibrahim Badran, the secretaries general of the ministries of Planning, Industry and Trade, Water, Agriculture, and Interior, Ambassador-designate to Israel Marwan Muasher, the economic secretary at the prime ministry and the assistant chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces for Intelligence.

SSC studies raising pensions

AMMAN — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) is currently studying the prospect of applying the recent raise in the pension rates for civil and military personnel to its own beneficiaries as well, according to SSC Director General Safwan Toukan.

Speaking on Jordan Television Monday, Mr. Toukan said that His Majesty King Hussein's latest directives to the government to raise the level of pension paid to retired servicemen and civil servants are also being considered as directives to the SSC.

Therefore we are currently re-examining the SSC law with the purpose of introducing amendments aimed at raising the level of the pensions given to beneficiaries to help them ensure a dignified retirement, said Mr. Toukan.

This essentially requires a re-examination of the insurance system within the SSC law to make certain a more effective alternative which would guarantee a higher pension for beneficiaries.

Acting upon directives from the King, the government Saturday announced that it was raising by 25 per cent the pension of officers, 22.5 per cent for soldiers and 17.5 per cent for civil servants.

In a recent lecture at Yarmouk University, Mr. Toukan said that the SSC covers 750,000 citizens employed in 9,300 establishments.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FRANCO-ARAB CINEMA FESTIVAL

☆ **Film entitled "Youcef: The Legend of the Seventh Sleeper" (Algeria 1993) at Cinema Concorde at 8:30 p.m.**

FILM

☆ **Film (in French) entitled "La Reine" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 6:30 p.m.**

CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

☆ **Bani Hamida Christmas Display with a variety of small gift items at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, First Circle, Rainbow Street.**

NEWS

☆ **ABC News Highlights and McNeil-Lehrer News Hour at the American Center at 5:00 p.m.**

SEMINAR

☆ **Seminar (in Arabic) entitled "What Comes After the Treaty?" with the participation of Dr. Husni Shnyab, Dr. Ya'coub Zayadin, and Mr. Bahjat Majali at the Arab Thought Forum at 6:00 p.m.**

EXHIBITIONS

☆ **Plastic art exhibition by Laila Kawash at the Royal Cultural Centre.**

☆ **Exhibition of paintings on leather by Iraqi artist Rakan Dabdub at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.**

☆ **Painting and water colours exhibition by Suhail Ma'touq at Baladna Art Gallery.**

☆ **Art exhibition by Ammar Khammash and Fuad Mimi at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre).**

☆ **Exhibition of works by Mahmud Obaidi at Darat Al Funun. Also showing an exhibition of portraits by Fahrelnissa Zeid and the exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.**

☆ **Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tamam Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.**

☆ **Exhibition of paintings by Sadik Kwaish at the French Cultural Centre.**

☆ **Exhibition by Akram Naji Shaker at Ab'aad Art Gallery.**

☆ **Exhibition by artists Lattif Al Khateeb and Muhy Khaleefa at the Housing Bank Gallery.**

Save water Every drops counts!

Korea, Jordan agree to study wastewater systems

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Planning Hisham Al Khatib and Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Jung Il Oh Monday signed a memorandum of understanding concerning technical cooperation for the expansion development study of the existing wastewater systems of Madaba and Ramtha.

The objectives of the study, according to a ministry statement, are expected to contribute to the socio-economic development of the Kingdom.

NAAA chief says Republican majority in U.S. Congress may 'indirectly' affect peace in Middle East region

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Executive Director of the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) (the largest Arab congressional lobby group in the U.S.) Khalil Jahshan said that although last month's Republican sweep of the U.S. House and Senate may not have a direct bearing on the progress of peace talks between Syria and Israel, the introduction of a Republican majority may indirectly affect peace in the entire region.

Mr. Jahshan Monday ended a two-week trip to the region, discussing bilateral relations between Arab countries and the U.S. His last stop was Jordan, where he held talks with Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the King's military secretary His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, Minister of Trade and Industry Rima Khalaf, and several members of Parliament.

Although Republicans historically have not been pro-Arab, they have tended to be less pro-Israel than their Democrat counterparts. But support for the peace process and the Arab stand in general, said Mr. Jahshan, will hinge on the war for the White House in 1996.

"My personal assessment is that the election results won't affect progress directly," the lobbyist said. "But it is in the interests of the Republicans to undermine both the foreign and domestic policy of Clinton."

As of now, Clinton's thread of hope rests in the success of Middle East peace, which would be viewed by the American public as Clinton's only foreign policy success, he said. And Republicans aren't likely to allow Clinton to capitalise on what was originally a Republican initiative, he said.

Mr. Jahshan told the Jordan Times during an interview, that if this conservative congress manages to curtail progress on the Syrian-Israeli track, it would be hard to see how the whole process could continue.

"This would definitely freeze the Lebanese track, as well as possibly freeze the Palestinian track," he said. "With this, I think the Jordanian-Israeli peace could become quite cold — like something that we see in Egypt."

Currently, the NAAA is focussing on the potential threat to aid to the Middle Eastern Arab countries, he said, since there is tremendous pressure in the U.S. to cut foreign aid. As of late, the outspoken and quotable Republican Senator Jesse Helms, in-coming head of the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee has consistently harshly criticised the amount of aid granted to the Middle East and has lobbied for a significant reduction.

"(The NAAA) wants to make sure that aid is distributed in an equitable manner," Mr. Jahshan said. "Israel gets the bulk of aid to the region without care for the other American allies in the region. Jordan especially has economic and social needs which need to be met in an adequate fashion."

In 1994, Jordan received nearly U.S. $20 million in U.S. aid compared to U.S.$3 billion in aid to Israel.

Mr. Jahshan said that the NAAA has been active in the past few years in trying to put U.S.-Jordan relations, which cooled after the Gulf War, back on track, and said that he feels bilateral relations between the two are improving.

"We discussed a range of U.S.-Jordan issues while I was here," Mr. Jahshan said of his meetings in Amman.

"The impact of U.S. elections on Jordan as well as the ways and means to enhance our relations and advance the peace process to the common goal of a comprehensive and lasting peace," were also topics of exchange in his talks with officials here.

The NAAA, he said, is not only pushing for foreign aid for Jordan but also for debt forgiveness and security for the Kingdom in the region.

Democracy is part and parcel of the NAAA programme, the lobbyist said, and Jordan's fledgling democracy is welcomed in the U.S.

But, he added that Jordan needs more "information work" to make sure its steps towards democracy are known in the U.S..

Although Jordan has taken important steps, it has not fully adopted the democracy of any Western countries, Mr. Jahshan said.

"Jordan is moving cautiously to implement reforms," he said, adding that this is only rational. Full implementation however, will only serve to improve the status of the Kingdom in the international forum as well as in the U.S. Democracy is also an important issue of the Arab-American population, he said.

"There is nothing more that (Arab-Americans) wish for their brethren than democracy. Democracy strengthens society," said Mr. Jahshan, "and it helps the Arab cause — at the end of the day, it makes lobbying congress much easier also."

Also on the NAAA agenda this year is a plan to end congressional attempts at prejudicing the final status of Jerusalem, and continued progress for final status negotiations.

"The NAAA wants to see democratic elections in Palestine, and we want to see a greater transfer of power — at the same time, we want to see final status negotiations," he said. "The Declaration (of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel) didn't dictate that final status negotiations had to wait until '96. It only said they were to begin no later than 1996. We want to make sure that Israel's commitment to this remains intact."

The NAAA has included Iraq and Bosnia in its 1994 policy platform: both matters were discussed during his visit to Jordan.

"We hope to convince the international community to begin to ease sanctions once Iraq abides by resolutions, abides by its decision to recognise Kuwaiti prisoners — I expect 1995 to be a turning point," he said.

Bosnia is a moral issue, he said, and criticised the U.S. for its hesitancy to take a stand as a world leader.

"The U.S. policy towards Bosnia has been hypocritical and contradictory — leaving the issue to be solved by Europe is immoral as the continent has its own internal ethnic problems," he said.

The NAAA policy states that the U.S. should take a stand if not to defend the Bosnian people, to lift the arms-embargo, taking a pro-active role.

Mr. Jahshan ended his bi-annual fact-finding trip to the Middle East Wednesday and returned to Washington, D.C.

Rao says Indian sugar case is serious but no misdeeds

NEW DELHI (R) — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, pressed by the opposition to resign over corruption charges, said Monday his government had uncovered no criminal wrongdoing by officials in a sugar scandal.

But Mr. Rao told a raucous lower house (Lok Sabha) that the sugar case had caused serious financial losses and he would decide what steps to take within one week of a debate expected to be held before the winter session of parliament ends Friday.

"Some loss has been caused. This is serious," Mr. Rao said. "The only thing is there is no malafide (malfeasance)."

The sugar scam and a $1.2-billion stock-market scandal have compounded the ruling Congress Party's embarrassment following a debacle earlier this month in state elections.

A government report pinpointed administrative lapses that caused a six-month delay in importing sugar until last May, by which time world prices had soared, raising New Delhi's bill and the cost to consumers by hundreds of millions of dollars.

The report criticised the cabinet committee on prices, headed by Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, as well as Food Minister Kalp Nath Rai and Civil Supplies Minister A.K. Antony.

The opposition has also accused the government of delaying purchases in the interests of big sugar firms and mill owners, and questioned whether officials benefited from the delay.

Bhuvanesh Chaturvedi, junior minister in the prime minister's office, told the lower house the government report "does not mention any matter that would create any suspicion of malafides on the part of anyone."

"This is yet another cover-up," retorted Jaswant Singh, leader of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, which over the weekend called for Mr. Rao's government to resign over the corruption probes.

"This is an absolutely clumsy effort, indulging in inanities," said Somnath Chatterjee, a deputy from the Communist Party of India-Marxist.

Mr. Rao said he had asked Mr. Rai to comment on the government report on the sugar case.

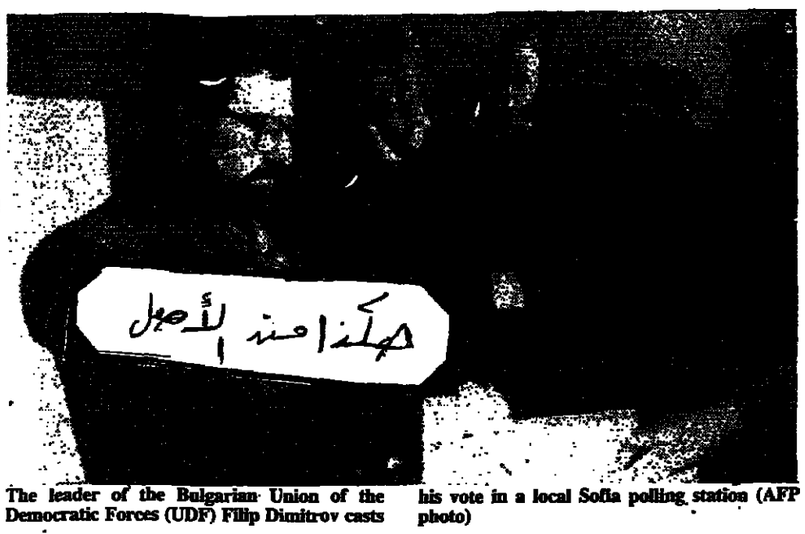
"I want to know the views of honourable members. After the debate, within one week I will take my decision on what is to be done," the prime minister said, referring to parliamentary debate which was expected in coming days.

"There is a difference between malafides and actual loss to the government with or without malafides," Mr. Rao said. "After hearing members, if I find there are malafides, I will tell you."

Mr. Rao's predicament was aggravated by the resurfacing of a 1992 stock-market scandal in which brokers and bankers were accused of illegally siphoning funds from government securities to invest in the then-booming stock market.

Health Minister B. Shankaranand and Junior Rural Development Minister Rameshwar Thakur, who held different posts at the time of the stock scandal, were cited in a joint parliamentary report that criticised the government.

The government said it would release a revised report on what steps it was recommending in the wake of the stock market scandal Tuesday.



The leader of the Bulgarian Union of the Democratic Forces (UDF) Filip Dimitrov casts his vote in a local Sofia polling station (AFP photo)

Bulgarian Socialists win elections

SOFIA (AFP) — Bulgaria's former communists face an uphill task as they prepare to form a broad-based government to tackle the country's crippling economic and and social problems following their general election victory.

The Socialist Party's victory makes Bulgaria the fourth former Soviet satellite to return to rule by former communists, five years after the fall of communism. Lithuania, Poland and Hungary all returned to the old guard to kickstart crippled economies.

But the Socialists will be hard pressed to fulfill the hopes of the nearly 44 per cent of the electorate that eased them into power ahead of their main rivals, the anti-communist former ruling Union of Democratic Forces (UDF).

Having played up the country's political instability and economic crisis during the campaign, Socialist leader Jean Videnov now has to deliver on his promises of a controlled transition towards a free market economy "at an acceptable social cost."

Bulgaria's woes — rising crime, rapidly-spreading poverty, and unemployment — have contributed to the Socialist appeal to a beleaguered electorate, but could prove a double-edged sword if the 35-year-old economist fails to deliver.

He has already pledged creation of 200,000 jobs. Bulgaria has an estimated 700,000 unemployed people.

The Socialists will put the accent on a tough anti-crime campaign, a boost in production as part of an economic restructuring, and a bid to halt the slide in living standards.

The new government will woo foreign investors and seek to break into Western markets with Bulgarian goods, seen as an important part of its preparations to join an enlarging European Union.

The Socialists, led by Mr. Videnov for the past three years, are assured of an absolute majority in the new parliament with 125 of the 240 seats, according to the latest official results.

He has already tried to avoid comparisons with the past totalitarian regime by saying he will seek to share power, and the blame for necessary but likely unpopular policies, within a broad-based government.

Already ruled out is a grand coalition with the rabidly anti-Communist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), led by former Prime Minister Filip Dimitrov, because of the difficult relationship between the parties in the outgoing parliament.

The Central Electoral Commission said the party had taken 43.61 per cent of the vote against 24 per cent for the Union of Democratic Forces, in a poll Sunday against a background of political instability and economic crisis.

Three centrist groups were also assured of winning the four per cent required for representation in parliament. One, the Popular Union — which is close to the UDF and groups the splinter Agrarian Party and the Democratic Party — will gain entry into the body with 6.48 per cent of the vote.

The Turkish minority Movement for Rights and Freedoms was set to re-enter the State Duma assembly with 5.39 per cent, while the Bulgarian Business Bloc representing small and medium-sized firms had won 4.8 per cent.

Turnout among the country's 6.5 million electorate was put at 74 per cent, down on the 81 per cent of 1991.

Ex-'Clean Hands' judge hits reporter at reception

BERGAMO, Italy (AFP) — Former leading anti-corruption Judge Antonio Di Pietro lost his cool and hit a journalist at his wedding reception, Italian papers reported. Around 40 people had been invited to the private reception celebrating Judge Di Pietro tying the knot with his long-time lover, lawyer Susanna Mazzoleni, whom he married the day before at Curno, near here. During the evening, the magistrate, whose dramatic resignation earlier this month from Italy's long-running "Clean Hands" anti-corruption investigation rocked the country, sped out of his home at the wheel of his car. He parked the vehicle next to another car around 150 metres from the villa, where a reporter for the Italian National News Agency (ANSA) was writing up his report. Visibly beside himself with fury, the judge grabbed hold of the journalist, pushed him against the car, head-butted him, then gave him a punch and a slap, demanding that he leave the scene immediately, the news reports charged. He then seized the reporter's camera and ripped out the film, while continuing to harangue other journalists present in the full view of the policemen who had been put on duty for his protection. A woman, believed to be one of the guests, intervened and managed to calm him down and persuade him to go home.

Under army's eye, Rio tourists to tan in peace

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — As the summer tourist season gets under way, army troops are being deployed to patrol Rio's popular beaches to protect visitors from petty crime, a military source said Sunday. The soldiers, clad in combat fatigues, will police Copacabana, Ipanema and other areas to combat armed petty robbers known as "beach rats" and gangs of youths who sweep along beaches, stealing nearly everything in their path. The troop deployment, dubbed Operation Rio, was launched as tourism officials predicted that about three-fourths of the city's 22,000 hotel rooms would be occupied throughout the austral summer.

Ginger Rogers steps out for charity in Britain

LONDON (R) — Legendary Hollywood star Ginger Rogers made a rare public appearance at a London theatre Sunday night for a star-studded charity spectacular. The 83-year-old star, whose dancing partnership with Fred Astaire is now part of film history, was honoured for her career at a gala celebration at London's Dominion Theatre. Now frail, Rogers arrived at the Dominion Theatre in a wheelchair for the evening, which raised funds for a London children's hospital.

'Fridgehenge' ready for mid-summer solstice

WELLINGTON (R) — "Fridgehenge," built entirely from old refrigerators in imitation of Britain's famous Stonehenge Monument, is ready for New Zealand's mid-summer solstice. "It is a comment on how consumerism and appliance acquisition has replaced spirituality," said Graeme Cairns, one of three New Zealanders who built Fridgehenge at Hamilton, south of Auckland, using 41 old fridges. He said they were hoping to attract a cross-section of people for the celebration. "Druids with clip-on beards, hippies, Japanese tourists, crackpots, you name it," Mr. Cairns said.

Apology follows billing of dead wife

LONDON (R) — A man whose wife and two children died in a car crash is to receive an official apology after the dead woman was sent a bill for repairs to a road barrier damaged in the fatal accident. British Transport Minister Brian Mawhinney has also demanded a report on the case, a spokesman for the Highways Agency, responsible for the letter.

Taiwan independence issue could trigger serious regional clash

TAIPEI (AFP) — A declaration of independence by Taiwan could trigger one of the most drastic regional clashes the world has ever seen, experts say.

"The Taiwan issue could trigger the world's most serious regional clash, and the fact that the two sides are Chinese descendants has made this even more tragic," the Taipei-based United Daily News quoted Hu Shaohua, a doctoral candidate in international relations at American University, as saying.

The Taiwan issue has become increasingly complicated in recent years, Mr. Hu told participants at a two-day seminar on potential military conflicts between Taiwan and China, held in Los Angeles.

In the past, cross-straits conflicts focused on when and under what type of system the reunification of Taiwan and China could take place.

But in recent years, with some sectors of Taiwanese society advocating formal succession from the mainland, the question of Taiwan's independence has inflamed the war of words between Taipei and Beijing, Mr. Hu said.

Mr. Hu said that tensions between the rival governments have flared following Taiwan's efforts over the past years to raise its international profile and join global or regional bodies.

"Once Taiwan declared independence, China would have no choice but to take military action against it," Mr. Hu was quoted as saying.

Taiwan's Nationalists fled to the island following their defeat by Communist forces in the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

Since then, the authorities in Beijing and their counterparts in Taipei have each claimed sovereignty over all of China. But Taiwan gradually has appeared to back away from that stance, and some opposition leaders have called for a formal declaration of independence.

Beijing has consistently stated that any formal announcement of self-rule would be regarded as a call to arms.

Mr. Hu said that even a leading liberal in the Chinese Communist Party, Li Ruihuan, recently indicated a genuine willingness to sacrifice all the benefits of the mainland's economic development to crush any effort by Taiwan to gain independence.

U.S. War College researcher Chang Ming said a shooting war has not erupted over the past four decades because Taipei has officially maintained policies recognising the "one-China" principle.

Foreign Ministry officials here said it would be hard to predict the consequences of a declaration of independence, but added that the government bans any act aimed at turning Taiwan into an independent state.

Vice Defence Minister Chao Chih-Yuan said China has made it clear it would attack Taiwan if the island moved towards real independence. "Our position is to prepare for any possible actions from the Chinese Communists," he noted.

Japan tightens military spending growth

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's military budget will increase by less than 0.9 per cent next year, the lowest increase in 35 years, but it remains by far the highest defence budget in Asia.

The Finance Ministry and Defence Agency also agreed Sunday to decrease military material acquisitions by 6.5 per cent during fiscal 1995, compared with 1994. These cuts, to 825 billion yen ($8.25 billion), will include "front-line weaponry" such as tanks and fighter planes.

The first to suffer from these cuts will be the Japanese military-industrial complex, for which the Defence Agency is the only arms market since Japan stopped all military exports after World War II.

"I am satisfied with this result," Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said Monday. He is the first Socialist head of government in 47 years and has made disarmament a priority.

Government spokesman Kozo Igarashi said the budget, which must still be approved by parliament, consolidates "the ruling coalition's policy of pushing for disarmament."

Last-minute jockeying during the weekend led to several additional reductions. The governing party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Socialists and the Japan New Party had agreed last weekend to a budget increase of 0.87 per cent. But the final figure announced Sunday was 0.85 per cent.

China unveils Hong Kong countdown clock

BEIJING (R) — Amid falling snow and a school band too cold to perform, Chinese officials Monday started a clock in Beijing's Tiananmen Square that will count down the days until Hong Kong returns to China.

The digital clock began on 925, the number of days remaining until Britain hands back the colony to Beijing at midnight on June 30, 1997. It and also showed the number of seconds — almost 80 million — left in the countdown.

A former nationalist general, Cheng Siyuan, now with the China Council for Promoting Peaceful Reunification, unveiled the clock outside China's Museum of History and Revolution that runs down the east side of Tiananmen Square.

Mr. Cheng and other officials cut a red ribbon to uncover the face of the huge timer, in a ceremony a day after the 10th anniversary of the joint declaration between London and Beijing governing Hong Kong's handover.

A band of brightly dressed primary-school children were too cold to perform and were allowed to go home after the ceremony began nearly an hour late in freezing temperatures, with officials delayed by driving snow.

China, which plans a similar timepiece in the town of Shenzhen bordering the British colony, Sunday urged Britain to cooperate more on Hong Kong affairs. Zhou Nan, director of the Xinhua News Agency in Hong Kong, said Governor Chris Patten had sabotaged relations between Britain and China with his plans to widen democracy.

He said he hoped Britain would keep its promises and cooperate in future in the smooth handover of the territory.

In December, 1984, Britain and China signed the joint declaration, which promises to preserve Hong Kong's capitalist way of life for 50 years and guareantees it "a high degree of autonomy" as a special administrative region of China.

The treaty ended a traumatic period of uncertainty over the colony's future, which had led to currency and property market crashes and a brain drain. Emgiration again increased dramatically after Beijing's 1989 massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators.

When in 1992 Mr. Patten announced his democracy reform proposals, China was infuriated. Discussions stalled on vital matters such as financing for the new $20.3 billion airport and railway project and the future court of final appeal.

28 die in New Guinea plane crash

PORT MORESBY (AFP) — Papua New Guinea's emergency services authority Monday blamed overloading for the deaths of 28 people in a plane which slammed into a cliff-face at the weekend.

Among the dead were eight children. Some had been sitting on their parents' laps during Saturday's flight from the Ok Tedi copper mine township of Tabubil in Papua New Guinea's central highlands, officials said.

The Twin Otter DHC6-300C, belonging to the Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF), had been carrying mineworkers and their families, to Selbang only 40 kilometres, and 15 minutes flying time away.

Papua new Guinea Emergency Services Director General Leith Anderson told AFP the weather "was not too good" and civil aviation authorities had advised him they believed the flight was overloaded.

However, MAF strenuously denied that the flight had been overloaded. It said the aircraft had recently been upgraded to carry more passengers and had been operating legally under the control of a highly experienced pilot.

Australian pilot Ron Hoey, 37, his Papua New Guinean flight attendant and all the passengers died in the crash. The passengers' names were withheld.

The plane was licensed to carry a pilot and 17 passengers, according to Mr. Anderson, but had been carrying a crew of two and 26 passengers, including the eight children. Mr. Anderson said however that children under three were permitted to share a seat with adults.

"I think the bottom line is that it was overloaded," said Mr. Anderson.

The crash, which followed another in which 12 people died a few weeks ago, was Papua New Guinea's worst aviation disaster since 1948 when a Guinea Airtrades Lockhead Hudson crashed killing 37 people.

The latest crash happened eight kilometres south of the Western Province town of Selbang, 500 kilometres northwest of the Pacific nation's capital.

Shiite militants angered by Karachi killings

KARACHI, Pakistan (Agencies) — A militant Shiite Muslim group Monday accused paramilitary Rangers of shooting dead three of its supporters in the Pakistani city of Karachi.

Tension remained high in the city, despite the start of talks between the government and the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) aimed at restoring peace in the troubled southern port.

At least 140 people have been killed since army troops returned to barracks on Nov. 30 after a 29-month deployment, dubbed operation clean-up, on the streets of Karachi and other cities in Sind province.

The Shiite Tehrike Jafria Pakistan (TJP) movement, feuding with the radical Sunni Muslim Sipah-E-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) group, warned the government of "serious consequences" following Sunday's killing of three of its supporters.

A TJP statement accused paramilitary Rangers of firing on peaceful protesters who had been demanding protection against attacks by Sunni Muslim gunmen.

Witnesses said Rangers fired on a crowd that surrounded them in the Jaffar-I-Tayyar society district to stop the Rangers from seizing protesters. Three people were killed and five, including two women, were wounded. At least 10 people were arrested.

Officials said the Rangers had opened fire in self-defence after one of them was wounded during a routine patrol.

The dead were among 13 people killed in Karachi Sunday, when separate strikes called by the SSP and a transport union paralysed schools, shops and businesses.

Talks between Sind province's Chief Minister Abdullah Shah and four MQM provincial assembly members got under way Sunday night, but MQM leaders said Monday little had been achieved.

"There is no major change in the government attitude," MQM provincial assembly member Khalid Bin Waleed, told Reuters.

"We repeated our demands and the government repeated its promise to fulfill them," he said. "If they want to see the dialogue bear fruit, they should implement some confidence-building measures."

He said the MQM had submitted 10 demands to the Sind government, including the quashing of legal cases against its leaders and activists, the release of all its supporters and compensation for people who lost relatives or suffered injury or damage to property during the army's operation clean-up.

President Farooq Leghari [illegible] night that he hoped the army's withdrawal, economic improvements and the provincial government's dialogue with the MQM and other parties would help end the violence.

"Now those talks, we hope, will move into a stage where positive results will be achieved," he said.

Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar told parliament in Islamabad the situation in Karachi had worsened after troops left because of a lack of coordination among law enforcing agencies.

He said the federal government was giving the provincial government time to handle the problem. "If it can't tackle it, then the centre will move in," Mr. Babar declared.

At least 700 people have died this year in ethnic and sectarian violence in Karachi.

President Leghari told reporters in Islamabad Sunday that Pakistan was indivisible and that none of its parts would secede.

"Those talking that Karachi would become another Hong Kong are living in fool's paradise," Mr. Leghari said.

The president's statement came amid reports that the opposition MQM, representing the predominantly Urdu-speaking community settled in Karachi and nearby Hyderabad city, might press [illegible]

Anglo-Irish talks on N. Ireland are due today

DUBLIN (R) — Newly-elected Irish Prime Minister John Bruton and British Prime Minister John Major will discuss the Northern Ireland peace process at hastily-arranged talks in London Tuesday night, official Irish sources said.

Mr. Bruton, who became prime minister last Wednesday after a month-long political crisis in Irleand, said the Anglo-Irish drive to find a political solution to the 25-year Northern Ireland conflict is his top priority.

It will be his first trip outside Ireland since taking office and follows the weekend discovery of the first bomb in Northern Ireland since the Aug. 31 Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefire and a truce by loyalist gunmen in October.

The review will also take place the day after the British government holds its second round of talks in Belfast with Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA.

An official announcement of the talks was expected later in the day and would reflect the desire of both governments to maintain the momentum of a peace drive slowed by the political crisis in Irleand, the sources said.

Ireland was without a majority government for four weeks after Albert Reynolds resigned as prime minister and lost the support of his Labour Party coalition partner in a row over legal appointments and the hand- [illegible]

The discovery of the semtex plastic explosive bomb jolted the atmosphere of peace Northern Ireland has enjoyed since the IRA declared a ceasefire to try to get its political ally Sinn Fein involved in peace talks.

Sinn Fein seeks to reunite Northern Ireland with the Irish Republic against the wishes of a Protestant majority which wants to remain part of the United Kingdom.

No organisation has claimed responsibility for planting the device, whcih was found near a furniture shop in the Northern Irish border town of Enniskillen Sunday.

The British and Irish governments are expected to launch shortly the second phase of the year-old Downing Street Declaration peace plan which preceded the twin ceasefire.

The plan is expected to include outlines for some kind of devolved government ion Northern Ireland as well as a pledge to alter rival constitutional claims to the province.

It is also said by officials to include proposals for cross-border authorities to run matters such as trade and investment to blur the frontiers between North and South and between Roman Catholic and Protestant.

The second phase was to have been unveiled by Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Major around the first anniversary of the Downing Street Dec- [illegible] delayed by the Irish government crisis.

The plan is expected to cause controversy because Northern Ireland's Protestant Unionist majority, which wants to stay British, fears that cross-border bodies will dilute or threaten their British sovereignty.

They are fiercely opposed to Dublin's involvement in the province's affairs and fear the plan will push it towards joint authority between Dublin and London.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams said Sunday the question of the disposal of the Irish Republican Army's weapons could not be resolved in talks restricted to officials from his party and the British government.

In a statement on the eve of talks between Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, and British officials, Mr. Adams said the question of IRA's arsenal could only be dealt with when all parties in the conflict were at the negotiating table.

"Sinn Fein does not have any weapons to dispose of. In fact it is our often stated objective to see the removal of all guns, Irish and British, from Irish politics," Mr. Adams said.

"The bilaterals between Sinn Fein and the British government will not find a solution. That is not their function.

"The British government should move speedily towards all-party inclusive dis- demilitrisation can be properly addressed along with the need for constitutional and political change and the issues of democratic rights," Mr. Adams said.

Sinn Fein's delegation was due to sit down with British officials for the second round of exploratory talks and to build on their first meeting 10 days ago, the first contact between the two sides in more than 70 years.

The talks are a reward for the IRA's four-month-old ceasefire and are designed to open the way for Sinn Fein to enter all-party political talks over the future of the British-ruled province.

But British officials have told Sinn Fein that getting rid of the weapons of the IRA, which has fought a 25-year campaign to oust Britain from Northern Ireland, is the price it must pay for political respectability and a place at the talks table.

British officials gave the same message to the political representatives of outlawed Northern Irish Protestant extremist groups, who are committed to Britain's continued presence, at their first round of talks last Thursday.

Mr. Adams, in a statement which augurs badly for Monday's session, rejected the British position.

"Sinn Fein is not the IRA," he said. "Sinn Fein does not speak for, nor in any way determine, the actions of the IRA. Sinn Fein is a separate and entirely different

Bosnian Serb soldiers prepare their artillery piece in a position in the surroundings of the Bosnian Muslim enclave Bihac. Bihac is still under siege of Bosnian Serb troops together with forces of rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic (AFP photo)

Carter: Serbs committed to peace

PALE, Bosnia (Agencies) — Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter told Bosnian Serbs Monday that the American people had "primarily heard one side of the story" in the war between Serbs and Muslims.

Mr. Carter, meeting Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic as part of a mediation mission to end the fighting, said in front of television cameras: "It may be that today is one of the rare chances to let the world know the truth and to explain the commitment of the Serbs to a peace agreement."

Mr. Carter met Mr. Karadzic at the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale outside Sarajevo. He had talks Sunday with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman.

He said the Pale talks, taking place at Mr. Karadzic's invitation, were the key to his mission and added: "There are some difficult decisions to be made."

In an exchange at the start of the meeting before journalists were excluded, Mr. Karadzic told Mr. Carter:

"Many Americans believe we came from Serbia and invaded someone's territory. If that were the case, we would have been the aggressor. This is not the case. We are natives here. Here are our roots."

Mr. Carter responded: "I can't dispute your statement that (the American people) have primarily heard one side of the story."

Mr. Carter arrived in Pale Monday for the second and most crucial stage of his three-day mediation mission.

Crossing Sarajevo's Brotherhood and Friendship Bridge, closed for two years of war until last February and open to restricted traffic since then, Mr. Carter arrived in the tiny mountain village shortly before 11:00 a.m. (1000 GMT) and was greeted by Serb leader Radovan Karadzic outside the former hotel that the Serbs have adopted as their "presidency."

Mr. Carter, who late Sunday had an hour of talks with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic in Sarajevo, made no reference to the content of the talks he would be having with the Serb leadership, though he noted there were "some difficult decisions to be reached."

Mr. Izetbegovic said Sunday that Mr. Carter had informed him Mr. Karadzic had expressed readiness to discuss mediation with a view to acceptance of the contact group peace plan, drawn up by the United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany.

He said Mr. Carter had assured him he was not proposing changes to the plan, though Mr. Carter said he regarded the plan as the "basis" for future negotiations.

The former president thanked Mr. Karadzic for expressing, in his invitation to come to Pale, his "commitment to honour human rights throughout the country."

Mr. Karadzic was accompanied by his deputy Nikola Koljevic and his foreign affairs spokesman as he greeted Mr. Carter. Serb army chief Ratko Mladic was not attending the talks.

The Serb leader welcomed Mr. Carter's visit as a "brilliant opportunity to offer you facts and data, to offer you the truth."

He said he hoped "to be able to come to some resolution which could open the door to peace."

Mr. Carter was due to complete his talks here by the evening before returning to Sarajevo. He was to report back to Mr. Izetbegovic and the Bosnian government before flying out of the besieged city.

He said he had accepted an invitation to travel to Belgrade to meet Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic after leaving Bosnia.

U.N. troops in Bosnia hope a recent thaw in their relations with Bosnian would have come about even if former U.S. President Jimmy Carter had not decided to visit Serb leaders, a U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman said Monday.

"We hope they have nothing to do with Mr. Carter," said spokesman Alexander Ivanko, in a reference to slight improvements in U.N. freedom of movement through Serb-held territories.

Relations between the Serbs and UNPROFOR in Bosnia deteriorated after the last NATO airstrike against the Serbs a month ago. Serbs restricted U.N.

The chilly mood led to active negotiations between the two sides last week, which culminated in a Serb promise to reopen the airport. As a result the logistical situation in Sarajevo "eased somewhat" according to Lieutenant Colonel Gary Coward, military spokesman for UNPROFOR.

N. Korea rejects quick meeting on downed pilot

SEOUL (R) — North Korea rejected a U.S. proposal Monday to begin talks at the Korean border on the return of the surviving pilot of a downed American helicopter, but Washington continued to press for his release.

The other crewman, of the helicopter, which strayed into North Korean territory Saturday morning, was killed, Pyongyang told U.S. officials.

North Korean officials at the border told U.S. military officers "their leadership was too busy with the investigation," into the incident to hold talks on the airman's release, said Jim Coles, spokesman for the U.S. military in Seoul.

But he added: "We continue to talk to the KPA (Korean People's Army) through a variety of other avenues."

Mr. Coles said those avenues included Representative Bill Richardson, a New Mexico Democrat and friend of U.S. President Bill Clinton who had arreived in Pyongyang on a previously scheduled visit just after the helicopter came down.

Mr. Clinton said Sunday that Mr. Richardson was staying in North Korea "for now" and would be in constant contact with North Korean officials. Mr. Richardson was originally scheduled to head to the South Monday morning.

Mr. Coles said earlier he wass hopeful the repatriation could be arranged "within the next few days."

"I think it's in everybody's interest to try and resolve this as soon as possible. I can see no evidence that either side is doing anything to prolong the process."

Stalinist North Korea says it shot down the helicopter after it intruded into its territory. Mr. Coles said it was too early to say why the helicopter came down.

He said he could not confirm a report by South Korea's Yonhap News Agency that quoted unnamed sources in South Korea as saying the dead pilot was cut down by North Korean fire while trying to take off after crash landing.

Mr. Clinton said the United States had asked North Korea to return the surviving airman, Chief Warrant Officer Bobby Hall of Brooksville, Florida, and the remains of Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon of Clarksville, Tennessee.

Mr. Clinton said the helicopter had "strayed into North Korean airspace" and the "tragic loss of life was unnecessary."

He said the information on the crew's fate came from the North Korean government through Mr. Richardson. According to that information, Officer Hilemon "was killed in the downing of the helicopter" while Officer Hall "is alive and reportedly uninjured."

"Congressman Richardson, who has been in continuing contact with Secretary of State Warren Christopher during this period, has at my instructions told the North Korean government, that we want prompt access to Chief Warrant Officer Hall and his return to a U.S. facility along with the remains of Chief Warrant Officer Hilemon," Mr. Clinton said.

Washington had been pressuring North Korea for details on the OH-58 helicopter and the pilots since it went down three to four miles (five to seven kilometres) north of the demilitarised zone (DMZ) in the eastern sector of the Korean border.

U.S. officials said the craft was unarmed and on a routine training mission. Defence Secretary William Perry said the Pentagon had launched a full investigation.

Mr. Coles said he had no ideaa what the helicopter was doing in North Korea but it was possible snow had obscured landmarks in the mountainous border area.

Mr. Richardson had talks with Foreign Minister Kim Yong-Nam and other senior figures, the North's Korean Central News Agency reported Sunday.

A spokesman for the congressman said in Washington earlier Sunday that Mr. Richardson had sought "immediate access" to the pilots and stressed that failurre to return them "would have a serious impact on U.S.-North Korean relations."

Frosty relations between Washington and Pyongyang had recently warmed following North Korea's agreement in October to revamp its nuclear programme.

Earlier this year they were on the brink of confrontation over the North's suspected nuclear weapons programme and its refusal to let U.N. experts inspect nuclear sites.

The United States, which promised to arrange delivery of safer nuclear reactors costing $4 billion, has been holding talks with the North over setting up liaison offices in each other's capitals as a first step towards normalising ties.

Russia welcomed as NATO, U.N. chiefs meet on Bosnia

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Military chiefs and officials gathered here Monday to try to agree a new get-tough policy for U.N. and NATO operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Concrete measures for a "gloves-off" policy in Bosnia are being backed mainly by the United States and France, anxious to end the daily humiliation of its troops by the Bosnian Serbs.

Russia, historically close to the Serbs, and Britain are understood to be lukewarm about a more muscular approach.

The first session of the two-day meeting was due to have been confined to NATO-member countries with troops in Bosnia, but representatives from Russia and Germany were invited in a bid to stress the meeting's consensus, said Captain Fritz Olivier, spokesman for the Netherlands' cheif of staff.

Russia's ambassador to Belgium, Vitaly Churkin, formerly Moscow's special representative to ex-Yugoslavia, and Germany's General Klaus Naumann were present despite being originally due to take part only in Tuesday's enlarged session covering states outside the Western alliance but with troops in Bosnia.

Russia remains outside NATO despite being offered associate membership through the Partnership For Peace programme. Germany has only recently decided to involve its military after overcoming long-stand constitutional difficulties.

The meeting sought "to identify the principal problems" dogging the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Bosnia, "and find solutions," Captain Olivier said.

He said the first talks, which were due to continue until late evening, were "very constructive."

Liberians warn warlords ahead of talks

MONROVIA (R) — Thousands of angry Liberians, some waving machetes, marched through the capital Monrovia Monday telling warlords leaving for peace talks in Ghana they should return with a treaty or not at all.

About 5,000 protesters, many of them visibly drunk, marched from the northeastern suburb of Paynesville, where militiamen last week massacred 48 people — more than half of them children — in an as yet unexplained attack.

"Our faction leaders are not serious, if they do not come back from Accra with peace this time they shouldn't come back at all," one demonstrator said.

He said the crowd would walk to the city's Spriggs Payne Airfield and give that message to militia chiefs and politicians leaving for the Ghanian capital for what their hosts have said was a last chance to end five years of civil war in the West African country.

An eyewitness near the airport saw two truckloads of troops from the ECOMOG African peace force arrive to reinforce an ECOMOG checkpoint, apparently intending to stop the marchers.

Ghana, chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has invited all of Liberia's warring factions, members of its interim government and delegates from the civilian Liberation national conference to a fresh round of peace talks, due to open Tuesday.

Powerful blast destroys houses in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India (R) — A powerful explosion destroyed six houses in the centre of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar Monday, trapping seven people under rubble, but no one was injured, police said.

The overnight blast also wrecked cars and boat houses and blew out window panes as far as one kilometre away.

Police, who called the damage "unprecedented", said the blast was apparently caused by explosive material hidden behind one of the houses but that the investigation was continuing.

One official estimated damage from the explosion, which blew a 2.5-metre (eight-foot) deep crater in the ground, at one billion rupees ($30 million).

No one claimed immediate responsibility for the blast, which occurred at 1.15 a.m. (1945 GMT Sunday).

Seven members of one family were pulled safely from the rubble of their house by neighbours.

Most of the houses that were damaged belonged to journalists, including one housing Reuter offices.

Indian forces have been engaged in a four-year fight with Kashmiri separatists in which more than 17,000 people have been killed.

League faces split over bid to oust Berlusconi

ROME (R) — Italy's Northern League leader Umberto Bossi branded party rebels "lice and pigs" Monday as his drive to bring down Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi ran into bitter internal opposition.

Mr. Bossi, who has said he will present a parliamentary no-confidence motion in the seven-month-old government, wrote in a weekly newsletter that the coalition he entered with media mogul Berlusconi at elections last March was dead.

"This time Berlusconi has really reached the end of the line," Mr. Bossi wrote.

He accused the billionaire businessman of acting like a Roman emperor, adding: "Italy did not vote for Berlusconi but for a programme that Berlusconi has betrayed."

Mr. Bossi, however, reserved his most venomous criticism for parliamentarians from his own party who have openly opposed his bid to topple the prime minister and form a new, broad-based coalition government with opposition left and centre parties.

"The League has never been for sale nor will it ever be, even though the League, like all parties, has been infiltered by some opportunistic lice and pigs," he wrote.

The League holds 103 of the five-party coalition's 352 seats in the 630-member Chamber of Deputies — enough to bring down the government if its members turn against Mr. Berlusconi in a vote expected late this week.

Mr. Bossi claims to have the backing of 325 members of the Chamber of Deputies to oust the government, whose main partners are the League, Mr. Berlusconi's Forza Italia party and the hard right National Alliance.

But League rebel Marcello Staglieno, the party's deputy leader in the Senate (upper house), said 24 senators and 60 deputies were prepared to vote the other way, including Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, the party's leading moderate.

Gen. Staglieno said none of the rebels supported what he called Mr. Bossi's plan to betray voters by entering government with the heirs of Italy's corruption-disgraced Christian Democrat Party and the old Communist Party.

The League Saturday announced it would submit a motion of no-confidence to the chamber with the centrist opposition Popular Party (PPI), successor to the Christian Democrats.

The former Communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) has announced its own no-confidence motion.

News of the motions sent the punch-drunk Italian lira diving to fresh lows against the German mark at the start of trading Monday as markets braced for what is likely to be an explosive week.

But neither motion had been submitted to the chamber by two p.m. (1300 GMT) Monday and under parliamentary procedure three days must elapse between presentation and the debate.

That and a delay in passage by the chamber of Italy's 1995 budget, now set for approval Wednesday night at the earliest according to one senior government official, suggested the confidence debate would not begin until Thursday.

The debate had initially been expected to start Wednesday.

Chamber Speaker Irene Pivetti has scheduled 22 hours of discussion in the debate, meaning a "do or die" vote on Mr. Berlusconi's government is unlikely before Friday.

Mr. Berlusconi has accused the League, big business interests and magistrates investigating him for alleged corruption of plotting to oust him in a "swindle at the expense of the electorate."

He plans to address the chamber immediately after the budget has been approved and has insisted that early general elections must be held if he is forced to resign.

Mr. Berlusconi will make a bitter attack on Mr. Bossi in a parliamentary confidence debate this week, accusing his fractious coalition partner of "betrayal," sources said.

Mr. Berlusconi spent the weekend in his Arcore mansion near Milan working on his speech to deputies, said the sources who leaked details of the premier's speech.

Angola awaits more U.N. observers

LUANDA (R) — Angola Monday awaited the arrival of fresh U.N. observers to help monitor its precarious ceasefire as special U.N. envoy Alouine Blondin Beye assured the southern African country of the world body's continued support.

"Today the first observers are coming," Mr. Beye said on arrival back at Luanda from New York where he had talks with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali and senior officials.

"The secretary-general fully understands the concerns of the Angolan people and stands shoulder to shoulder with them," he told reporters at the airport.

U.N. officials said they expected the first new observers to expand the existing United Nations contingent to arrive on Mr. Beye's plane, but none were with him. "They will probably come on another plane," one official said.

General Chris Caruba, head of the U.N. Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), said he was expecting seven observers Monday and "about 40" by the Christmas weekend.

The final strength of the mission would be 350 military and 126 police observers, he said.

UNAVEM's 80 observers already on the ground have been deployed around the country, where the month-old ceasefire followed 19 years of savage civil war.

Gen. Caruba told Reuters: "The areas I am particularly worried about are (the northern town of) Uige and (the central province of) Huambo."

"These are flashpoint areas and we need to get our people in these areas very quickly to separate the warring forces. We need to pull the troops apart to stop further provocation."

Troops from the government and opposition UNITA movement in Uige hold positions less than 100 metres apart and soldiers from both sides — at war virtually since independence from Portugal in 1975 — have reported sporadic shooting.

The ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) signed a peace accord in the Zambian capital of Lusaka on Nov. 20.

UNAVEM officials already deployed in the northern town of Uige described the situation there as "very tense."

UNAVEM has reported various ceasefire violations, many of them in Huambo province, where UNITA had its headquarters until government troops drove it from the provincial capital during the final stages of the Lusaka talks.

The U.N. has said it would only send the approximately 7,000 peacekeeping troops agreed in the peace accord when the Security Council receives a report from Mr. Beye saying the ceasefire is holding. Mr. Beye said the level of violations so far would not affect the deployment of the observers.

"If there are violations, they are not significant. The Security Council has said the violations will not affect the arrival of the observers," he said.

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Modernity inside the law

IT IS good news to hear that two key Cabinet ministers have decided to speak out on a sensitive issue that concerns the public at large. The minister of interior, Salameh Hammad, and the minister of justice, Hisham Tel, came out strongly last week against the archaic tribal justice system that continues to be practised as if this land had no law of its own. We are talking about specific tribal ways of administering justice that are based on vengeance and taking the law into one's own hands.

Jordan is a modern state on the threshold of the 21st century. We also have a vibrant and contemporary constitution, a progressive National Charter and an iron-clad commitment to human rights. This country is also party to several important conventions and treaties touching on all walks of life. It is therefore strange, to say the least, that tribal justice continues to be applied in spite of the existence of a more than adequate court system that assures fair trial and provides adequate remedies to all problems.

In this context, it is not only the tribes or their members who bear full responsibility for this outdated and unsophisticated system of justice. The state is also a culprit in the sense that it indirectly — and some times directly — encourages adherence to mediaeval ways. For example, the "atwa" that tribes or families grant to an aggrieved tribe or family when one of its members is either killed or injured, intentionally or otherwise, is still viewed as a necessary complement to the law. Even government officials take part in securing these "atwas" in a bid to allow for a certain grace period during which an act of vengeance would be halted or stopped pending the settlement of the case. Our court system still takes account of the fact that concerned tribes or families have reconciled their disputes and rendered justice among themselves.

The crux of the problem is not only the settlement of such cases outside the purview of the law, but also dealing with such incidents as collective issues affecting the whole tribe or family instead of individuals.

Now, it seems, the government appears to be edging towards tackling this social problem by the enactment of a new law. While we are all relieved to hear this, we wonder if more laws or additional articles of law alone would do the necessary job. The right course is to launch a campaign against outdated and unfair customs with the means at our disposal first. The convening of a national conference on the issue could be the right way to launch the effort, as indeed some governors have already done in their districts at the behest of the minister of interior. Then other concerned parties can join in, like the lawyers' union, sociologists, law-enforcement agencies and think-tanks. The end result would have to be an end to the practice of flawed customs that should have been dispensed with a long time ago.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in **Al Ra'i** daily said that current efforts to bring about reconciliation among Arab states are to be commended, but warned against over-optimism and excessive enthusiasm about quick results. Mahmoud Rimawi said that inter-Arab relations are to a great extent still governed by personal relations at the leaders' level, and unless these are mended the Arab masses in the Arab countries would continue to remain far apart, as before. What is required now, said the writer, is rebuilding inter-Arab ties, on more sound and solid grounds than before, and future relations ought to be based on mutual respect regardless of the size or wealth of each state so that reconciliation can be sustainable and flourish. He said mediators should take into consideration all those elements that marred relations so far and ought to remove the seeds of hatred that rendered the Arab countries apart for so long. Reestablishing solidarity among Arab countries, added the writer, requires genuine and sincere efforts because the divisions are still deep and widespread.

A WRITER in **Al Dustour** urged the finance minister to be fair to the already retired employees and not to restrict the 17 per cent extra cost of living allowance only to those who retire as of this month. Mohammad Subeihi said that by granting one faction of retired people the 17 per cent allowance and depriving others, the country would not be doing justice to those who had served their nation for long years and happened to have retired before December 1994.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

Bahrain, crystal chandeliers, and minds of men and women

By any measure, the demonstrations in Bahrain during the past week have been relatively modest in size and intensity. They are noteworthy, however, for their political significance. One clue to this is the manner in which the demonstrations are being interpreted by different parties. Some Bahraini democracy activists claim the agitation is for more democratic rule and human rights in the country. Government officials blame the trouble on foreign agitation (Iran is the main culprit in Bahrain, as it also seems to be in Egypt, Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia, and just about everywhere else in the Arab World where local troubles need foreign explanations). Some commentators, suggest that economic pressures are the main catalyst for the disturbances, while others like to blame Shi'a-Sunni splits.

All of these factors are valid to some extent, but none of them alone satisfactorily explains why policemen and citizens should be killing each other in Bahrain this week. Bahrain is merely the latest confirmation of two compelling realities that have imposed themselves on many other Arab countries in the last decade: 1) one cannot aspire to genuine stability, especially in relatively well educated countries, without a political governance system that allows for a combination of grassroots participation and accountability of public officials; and; 2) one cannot build a sustainable economy mainly on the basis of the serendipitous spinoffs of regional oil income, and within the geo-political context of foreign imperial protection.

Bahrain, like all the other economies in the Gulf region, is in the midst of serious belt-tigthening due to the sustained recession that has defined the Gulf economies since around 1983. Kuwait has just announced a 25 per cent cut in spending on construction projects, while Saudi Arabia plans to cut its government budget by 20 per cent for the second year in a row. Bahrain's budget deficit for the next two years will rise sharply, from $192 million in 1994 to $317 million in 1995 and $296 million in 1996, to be financed by domestic borrowing.

All members of the Gulf Cooperation Council are drawing down reserves, cutting government spending, generating more income through fees and taxes, expanding their budget deficits, or borrowing at home and abroad. These are normal measures that normal countries take in trying times, as they try to adapt to new economic realities. Economic cutbacks, though, also require a certain degree of suffering and sacrifice by the people, who have a voice in the decisions that are made to cope with the current economic pressures. It is noteworthy that this week's demonstrations were sparked by the arrest of Sheikh Ali Salman who had called for the restoration of Bahrain's elected parliament, and who had previously been detained for urging Bahrainis to protest the country's rising unemployment rate.

This combination of economic and political factors working together to prod change fits into a broader political pattern that defines much of the Gulf region — very noticeable in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar — whereby people pressure their political leaderships for governance systems that are more participatory and accountable, and characterised less by the wealth and privileges of a small ruling elite. The Gulf states are experiencing in the mid-1990s the same harsh realities that the rest of the Arab World experienced in the mid-1980s — the fact that stability cannot be assured only through the actions of a highly centralised state that interacts with its people mainly through the use of violence or through handouts of cash, jobs, subsidised services and fabulous contracts.

The Gulf states are learning — contrary to what they have been told for many decades by British arms and crystal chandelier salesmen — that their people and their countries are not special or different. A combination of Western colonialism, racism and commercial overkill has tried to convince us and the world that the Arabs of the Gulf states are unique beings, singularly crafted by God as docile consumers who care more for their cars and imported marble bathrooms than they care for their human dignity.

The current phase of national transformation in the Gulf reveals that the nationals of the Gulf states are not complacent and materialistic simpletons who will forever acquiesce in bizarre political cultures where a handful of men decide on the expenditures of billions of dollars annually and the fate of entire countries. The unspoken but spellbinding new factor in the Gulf and the entire Middle East is the chilling verdict of the so-called "new world order" — that small or large countries that start to stumble will be allowed to burn, to collapse, or to be handed over to radical ideological leaderships, because these countries no longer offer strategic advantage to foreign superpowers, and thus they no longer matter very much. In a region no longer awash in oil income surpluses, a heavily Western- and Saudi-oriented banking centre like Bahrain — like Beirut before it — suddenly seems almost anonymous, perhaps more peripheral and perishable than the world's great commercial powers.

Instinctively, people in Bahrain and the Gulf region are realising these facts, and coming to terms with the real sources of their future wellbeing: the self-confidence and dynamism of their own people, within a context of more regional integration of Arab and other Middle Eastern resources. More people in the Gulf are agitating against the abnormalities of oligarchic political cultures, and they are doing so now because it took the GCC states about a decade more than it took the rest of us in the Arab World to reach the end of the 1973-1983 oil boom decade. The discomforts of economic restructuring and the urge for representation alongside taxation are powerful catalysts for political modernisation, whether in early 13th century Engalnd, late 18th century America, or late 20th century Arabia.

The transformations that must take place in the Gulf states will not be particularly radical, as we can see in the ongoing changes in Kuwait since 1991, or indeed, in our own Jordanian experience since 1989. The main requirements are to temper the excessively centralised control of political and economic power by the state, to engage the citizenry as a whole in a more normal process of consultative and participatory decision-making, and to promote the dynamism, material assets and ingenuity of the citizenry, rather than the state's capacity to borrow, spend and waste money, as the main force of nation-building.

Ordinary Arab people seek the very logical and unfrightening demands of states that make sense, of economies that function reasonably well on the basis of their native assets, and of the exercise of political power in a manner that generates dignity and pride among the citizenry, rather than fear and resentment they seek information media that spend less time and effort generating vacuous, emotional propaganda that treats its own citizenry like sheep, and more time allowing the people to discuss their important public poilcy issues in an atmosphere of maturity and responsibility.

These reasonable demands have reverberated throughout much of the Arab World in the last decade, and it is not surprising that they should now emanate from yet another small gulf country that struggles with the challenges of having to live within its means. Bahrain is well placed to meet its challenges because it has always spent heavily on education and allowed its women to expand their professional and personal horizons. It will triumph by allowing its people to use their minds, rather than to freeze them.

The future of the environment in a world of trading

By Yara M. Al Farhan

In 1946, as part of the Bretton Woods reconstruction efforts after World War II, a meeting was called to draft a charter for the International Trade Organisation (ITO). The aim behind this organisation was to facilitate trade between the nations of the world and thus boost the economies of the participating countries. The charter of the proposed ITO was never completed. Instead, in 1947, nine countries adopted the Protocol of Provisional Application of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT). This agreement was intended to be temporary, pending the acceptance of the ITO terms which, it was thought, would soon follow.

The parties to the GATT are bound by four main anti-competition obligations to which they must strictly adhere or risk being subject to economic sanctions. In brief outline these obligations are:

— Not to grant preferential treatment to one country over another (article 1).

— Not to levy more than the agreed amount of import tariffs (article II).

— To treat imported goods, once they have cleared customs, the same as nationally produced goods (article III).

— Not to impose quotas or other quantitative restrictions on imports/exports (article XI).

The GATT uses "rounds" of talks to agree its policies. The most recent of these sessions was the Uruguay Round which started in 1986 and was completed in December 1993. This seven-year period of negotiations ended with the decision to finally adopt the successor of the ITO — the long awaited institutional framework now referred to as the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Much time and effort is spent on improving the conditions of international trade. An increase in industrial activity however, usually results in a corresponding increase in damage to the environment. Far less attention has been paid to environmental concerns than to trade issues, largely because protecting the environment does not result in direct financial reward.

Whereas in the Western world the necessity of protecting the global environment has become an imperative addition to political agendas, in less economically developed parts of the world this has not yet happened. Environmental issues in the Third World still take second place to more pressing political concerns such as national debt, housing and feeding an ever growing population and economic growth. The newly recognised Western concern with protecting the environment is an additional demand on public funds that can be ill-afforded.

One way of making global environmental protection more relevant to a larger number of governments is to somehow link the cost of environmental protection to the volume of international trade. As already mentioned, article I of the current GATT provisions creates what is known as the "most favoured nation" (MFN) status. This means that each GATT signatory must grant to all other members import/export treatment at least as favourable as it grants any country with regard to "like products." Thus, similar products from different countries must be treated in similar ways. By extending this provision to include similar production methods, any "like product" made by a process which differed from that in the importing country, say with more damage to the environment, would not be covered by the MFN provision, so higher import taxes could be imposed. This would make products produced by less environment friendly methods more expensive and eventually less profitable to produce which could lead to an improvement of the production methods.

> ***"Environmental issues in the Third World still take second place to more pressing political concerns such as national debt, housing and feeding an ever growing population and economic growth. The newly recognised Western concern with protecting the environment is an additional demand on public funds that can be ill afforded."***

The WTO negotiators, however, chose not to extend the scope of the GATT article I. Despite their rare opportunity to adapt the articles of association to cover issues that are not directly relevant to trade, it seems that to satisfy the demands of the majority of signatories protection of the environment was ignored.

The text agreed at the Uruguay Round that creates the WTO will not apply until Jan. 1, 1995. By looking at an earlier draft of the agreement, however, the most obvious omission is that no specific commitment to environmental protection has been made. Although the preamble states that trade should be conducted with a view to "developing the optimal use of the resources of the world at a sustainable level..." this does not create binding obligations, merely acts as guidance for parties interpreting the agreement. The main body of the draft agreement, however, makes no express mention of the environment at all.

The draft agreement, however, does not include annexes agreed between the parties at the Uruguay Round which are binding on all signatories. The Agreement on Agriculture, for example, states in its preamble that "commitments... should be made in an equitable way... having regard to non-trade concerns, including food security and the need to protect the environment.

Can it be sufficient, where an issue as imporant as the welfare of our environment is at stake, for such provisions to be hidden away at the end of the document in preambles of agreements found only in the annexes to the main text? The environmentalist lobby would say not, yet the proponents of international trade reply that WTO has been created to facilitate trade across national borders, primarily by the reduction of tariffs and taxes. Protection of the environment is not expressly within its brief, so arguably any conservationist measure it does adopt is already a concession in the environmentalists' favour.

This seems to me a remarkably short-sighted attitude. The weight of the environmentalists' arguments should not have been so readily dismissed. Although the WTO cannot be expected to cure the world of all its ills, the drafters have failed to grasp the opportunity that was afforded them; it would have been possible with only slight amendments for the environment to at least be recognised as a concern relevant to international trade. From then on it would, of course, be a matter for national governments to adopt whatever measures they felt were appropriate or that they could afford. Accordingly, the WTO would not have been required to assume the role of environental guardian as might have been feared.

Any international organisation existing today should be aware of the problems facing the world around it. While to most people the size of import quotas and trade levies are obscure policy decisions, the continued existence of this planet is of vital importance to us all.

The writer has a masters degree in international law from the University of Nottingham, U.K. She contributed the above article, which is an extract from a dissertation submitted to the university on the occasion, to the Jordan times.

East Europe's press faces a threat it thought was history

By Tina Rosenberg

ON Sept. 15, by a three-to-one margin, the Sejm, the lower house of Poland's parliament, passed a bill providing up to 10 years in prison for anyone disclosing an official secret. And an official secret can be whatever a government clerk says it is — in 71 different categories. If the upper house passes the bill this month and President Lech Walesa signs it, bureaucrats will be free to declare the publication of anything from the population of Gdansk to a report of a coming kielbasa shortage a punishable offence.

The passage of that law in Poland, which currently enjoys the freest and most sophisticated press in the former Soviet bloc, would be a calamity but not a surprising calamity. From Hungary to Uzbekistan, governments have enacted laws authorising prior censorship, classifying routine information as official secrets, and granting public officials such comprehensive protection against "defamation" that in some countries debate about government policy has been muted to the point of silence. These laws, almost comically vague, hand the authorities a weapon usable against any critic. Many governments did not even have to start from scratch: they simply revived laws the Communists had used to jail dissenters, sometimes increasing the prison terms.

Some of Europe's most celebrated champions of free speech have drifted into helping to circumscribe it. In Warsaw last year, President Walesa allowed police to beat up anti-Walesa demonstrators outside his office. Polish journalists have been jailed for attacking politicians in print; the author of an article in a provincial newspaper served two and a half months for calling local Solidarity leaders "dopes" and "small-time politics and careerists." In Prague last November, the parliament renewed two Communist-era statutes outlawing defamation of public officials and institutions — the same statutes under which a playwright named Václav Havel was imprisoned 15 years ago. Mr. Havel, now the President of the Czech Republic, asked his country's new Constitutional Court to review on the laws, and the court struck down its most noxious provisions. He did not appeal the second law, which protects — well, the president of the Czech Republic. It was quickly used against his bête noire, an editor-publisher named Petr Cibulka, whose stock in trade is the notion that Mr. Havel (along with thousands of other innocent people) was an informer for the Communist secret police. Mr. Cibulka was charged with defaming the president by calling him a "pig" and a "brute." Mr. Havel pardoned him, but the law remains in effect.

One treads carefully in reproaching Václav Havel on human-rights grounds. But such laws are more dangerous than any journalist, even a fantasist and ranter like Mr. Cibulka. And, while pardons are better than no pardons, they do nothing to dispel — indeed, they strengthen — the persistent popular belief that the freedom of the press exists at the sufferance of the state.

Despite the defamation laws, the press in Poland and the Czech Republic is, for the moment, largely free. But Poland's proposed secrets act is a warning that these countries could easily come to resemble their less enlightened East European brethren. Slovakia's constitution lists broad categories of permitted censorship, including protection of "law and order" and "morality." The Romanian senate passed a bill increasing penalties for "insult" to public officials; by it, a reporter who pursues even the most basic kind of investigative information — evidence that a policeman is on the take, for example — will risk seven years' imprisonment. (It won't matter if the information is accurate; truth will not be a permitted defence). Last November, the Albanian government, controlled by the increasingly misnamed Democratic Party, enacted a law almost identical to the Romanian one. Since then, two reporters have been arrested and a handful of others beaten or harassed. But numerous arrests are unnecessary; news organisations, which had decades of practice in self-censorship, are again heading off trouble by firing even the mildest provocateurs. Albanian television dismissed a journalist who reported that farmers were letting their cows wander onto the runway of the country's main airport.

West European governments have inadvertently encouraged the authoritarian trend by advocating the adoption of press laws like those that have long been traditional in their own countries. Albania's press laws is a virtual copy of that of the German province of North Rhine-Westphalia; the text was provided to Albania by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the highly respected international arm of the German Social Democratic Party. And the Council of Europe has urged East European states to enact press laws, thinking that in their absence governments would bully journalists into one-sidesubserience. In the West, however, independent courts and strong democratic traditions guard against the abuse of such laws. (Britain's Official Secrets Act is a deplorable exception). The official secrets protected in Westphalia are clearly and narrowly defined in the German Basic Law. The ones protected in the East are defined either impossible broadly or as in Albania, not at all — it's the bureaucracy's call. The Westphalian punishes defamation, but the German courts have made it clear that defaming a public official requires a more strenuous effort than defaming an ordinary citizen. East Europe stands this on its head: the more powerful the person, the more protection he gets.

Another justification offered by defenders of the new laws is the irresponsibility of the press; and there's no denying that many papers in East Europe are simply party organs stuffed with fawning interviews with friendly politicians and unsubtle insinuations that opponents serve some sinister foreign interest. It is also argued — paradoxically — that the very fragility of democratic rights and institutions justifies censorship: Communists are using the free speech they denied to others to destabilise democratic governments, and controls, therefore, are necessary to prevent a return to dictatorship.

It's debatable how real these dangers are. The remedy prescribed for them, however, is provably toxic. East Europe's totalitarian nightmare is surely as dead as the ideology that animated it, but there are many varieties of unfreedom, and the milder ones are hardly to be recommended simply because they fall short of the Stalinist prototype. The impulse to control the press is a natural hang over from the old days. Even dissidents couldn't help absorbing some of the pathologies of a system that announced election results in advance and lied about the weather. Today's public officials spent their lives in societies where the leader's word was law and independent institutions were scarce; criticism was tantamount to treason, and honest dissent was an oxymoron. This situation is not altogether disagreeable to those who hold power, and they are understandably reluctant to give it way. They feel little pressure to do so from their own citizens, most of whom regard a docile press as normal, and so far their censorship has cost them virtually nothing in the West. It ought to cost them more — *The New Yorker.*

هكذا من الأصل

Russians push towards Grozny

(Continued from page 1)

A doctor at the Grozny military hospital, Leici Gelayev, said six people had been killed and two seriously wounded as they fled their village north of the city.

Russian troops entered Chechenya on Dec. 11 to end a three-year independence bid. The task force besieging Grozny has been under constant harassment from lightly armed but defiant Chechen independence fighters.

Interfax reported that the Russian troops were being relieved by fresh soldiers.

Infantry attached to the Black Sea naval fleet and highly trained troops from the Privolzhskovo, Sibirskovo and Uralskovo military districts are being sent shortly, Interfax said, citing unnamed sources.

The Russian government communique claimed that some of President Dudayev's men were demoralised and trying to flee to the southern mountain region, but that he was paying Afghan guerrillas between $800 and $1,000 a day to stay in reserve for a showdown.

A diplomatic solution appeared more unlikely than ever Monday. Mr. Dudayev on Sunday rejected the terms of Mr. Yeltsin's last-chance offer of new negotiations.

Mr. Yeltsin, angered by Mr. Dudayev's refusal to buckle to pressure, late Sunday said his office would no longer even reply to the Chechen leader's telegrams.

Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Yegorov in charge of relations between the Russian Federation's nationalities was made as special representative to help rule Chechnya once it rejoins or is forced back into the Russia fold.

Mr. Yegorov's job would amount to imposing direct rule on the mostly Muslim republic, which Russia conquered in the 19th century.

The Russian migration department said 12,577 people, mostly ethnic Russians, had fled Chechenya, which has a population of 1.2 million people, since the beginning of December.

Feeding Russian fears that the crisis will spill into other volatile areas of the Russian-dominated region, the nationalist Confederation of People of the Caucasus said it had sent more than 1,000 volunteers to help the Chechens.

Moscow has been on a heightened security alert since the intervention more than a week ago. On Monday, army and interior ministry soldiers used armoured cars to patrol all major entrances to the city.

The commander of Chechen armed forces urged the people of the Caucasus to rise against the Russians.

Colonel Aslan Maskhadov, who appeared on television in military fatigues, said: "I call on the people of the entire Caucasus region to rise up and repel the aggressor."

In neighbouring Ingushetia, a senior Russian government official criticised Moscow's military operation, saying the army had no business dealing with problems on its own territory.

Lieutenant-General Valery Vostrokin, a deputy minister for emergency situations, told reporters that being a policeman on Russia's own territory "was not a good job for the military."

Gen. Vostrokin's remark was the latest sign of high-level unease at the deployment of troops in Chechnya, Russia's biggest such military operation since the 10-year Afghan debacle.

Mr. Yeltsin's erstwhile liberal allies, headed by former reform chief Yegor Gaidar, say large-scale bloodshed would ultimately damage the Kremlin leader's democratic credentials.

"The army is depressed by a lack of sense and clarity in its functions," liberal deputy Ella Pamfilova was quoted by RIA news agency as saying.

U.S. says Iran helping Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

"There is no shame in having economic interests in Iraq. You think Americans have no economic interest in Iraq?"

Rationing to continue

The Iraqi government has decided to maintain rationing of staple foods next year, press reports said Monday.

The decision was taken during a cabinet meeting Sunday chaired by President Saddam Hussein, who is also the country's prime minister.

Iraqis and foreigners living in Iraq receive ration books at the start of every year for five foods judged to be essential.

Last September the government slashed monthly quotas of four types of food after the Security Council voted to maintain the embargo.

Flour was cut from nine to six kilogrammes while rice quotas fell from 2.5 to 1.5 kilogrammes.

Monthly rations of sugar were cut from 2.5 kilogrammes to 750 grammes, and cooking oil was cut from 7.5 to 6.5 litres.

Tea remained unchanged at 100 grammes.

GCC leaders open summit

(Continued from page 1)

man, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, called for restraint at the funeral of Hani Ahmad Al Wasti on Sunday and did not make a call for jihad against the government, as an opposition statement issued in Beirut said.

The witnesses quoted Sheikh Jamri as saying "we would like to assure the government that the language of bullets is of no avail. We are calling for restraint in the interest of the people and the government."

The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain said Sunday Sheikh Jamri had declared jihad at Wasti's funeral.

Saturday's government statement pinned blame on Sheikh Salman, who apparently only recently returned from theological studies in Iran.

Weizman begins Egypt visit

(Continued from page 1)

Israel is still occupying Syrian land?" Mr. Darwish said. "I refuse to attend any reception. Syria rejects meetings outside the negotiations because any contact is a concession on sovereignty and dignity."

Another thorny issue between Egypt and Israel has been Cairo's insistence that Israel sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Mr. Musa said Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Weizman would discuss the issue.

"We hope there will be a concrete step by Israel towards satisfying the general perception in the area that weapons of mass destruction will have to be dealt with immediately in connection with the peace process. This is a very important issue but we don't take it as a confrontational issue," Mr. Musa said.

Mr. Weizman hopes to encourage Cairo to boost its relations with Israel which until now have been distant because Egypt did not want to upset its Arab neighbours which boycotted it for nine years for making peace with the Jewish state.

But now that most Arabs have made peace with the Jewish state or are on their way to, the diplomats expect Cairo to open up.

Mr. Weizman was to spend the night at the Al Qubba Palace and was scheduled to give a news conference on Tuesday.

Gur: self-rule deal is distant

(Continued from page 12)

been unsuccessful at fighting terrorism."

Mr. Rabin, after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize with Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres in Oslo earlier this month, said he hoped the elections could be held in 1995. He said attacks by anti-peace Palestinian guerrillas were the main obstacle.

Palestinian Authority member Nabil Shaath, a leading negotiator with Israel, said: "I believe that the moment of truth is drawing nearer."

Children should be at centre of development strategy, says UNICEF

By Judy Aita

UNITED NATIONS — Presenting a positive report on successes being made to improve the health, nutrition, and education of millions of children in the developing world, a top official of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) said Dec. 15 that "the time has come now to put children at the centre of development strategy."

At a news conference introducing the 1995 "State of the World's Children" report, UNICEF Director of Operations Karin Sham Poo said this approach is not based on sentimentality but "on the fact that minds and bodies are being formed and even temporary deprivation can affect development."

"UNICEF has continued to advocate that these very vulnerable years of development should have first call on society's resources and development and should be maintained in good times and bad times," Ms. Sham Poo said. "A child has only one chance to develop.... There will always be something more immediate but there will never be anything more important."

UNICEF officials stressed that the health and development of children affects the health and development of a country.

"You can't just save children's lives without doing anything to help children survive," said Peter Adamson, author of the report.

"The continued economic and social marginalisation of the poorest nations, and of the poorest communities within nations, is depriving far larger numbers of children of the kind of childhood which would enable them to become part of tomorrow's solutions rather than tomorrow's problems," the report said.

UNICEF wants to see more financial support for the basic needs of children in both developed and developing countries, and it wants the protection of children to be a main item on the agenda of the World Summit for Social Development to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995.

"Action to protect the rising generation could and should be a leading edge of any new effort to bring about sustainable development," the report said.

At the same time, UNICEF officials said, the achievements by the majority of developing nations in meeting the international goals set for children deserve wide recognition.

According to the "State of the World's Children" report, the 15th annual one prepared by UNICEF, a majority of the developing countries are on the verge of achieving the goals set in 1990 at the World Summit for Children for improving the health, nutrition and education of millions of children in the developing world by the year 2000; that means child deaths will be cut by one-third, malnutrition by half, major childhood diseases like measles and diarrhoea will be brought under control, and at least 80 per cent of children can complete primary school.

"Overall we find that in 100 developing countries with 90 per cent of children they are making significant progress in the goals set four years ago," Ms. Sham Poo said.

Mr. Adamson said the majority of the goals are going to be met, which means that "by mid-decade about 2.5 million fewer children will be dying every year from malnutrition and disease and at least three quarters of a million fewer children each year will be disabled, blinded, crippled or mentally retarded."

He said one of the greatest successes noted in the report has been the progress being made against iodine deficiency disorders, which are the biggest single cause of preventable mental retardation. UNICEF estimates that about 26 million people are brain damaged by the lack of iodine in their diet and over 600 million are physically or mentally affected in some way. The solution is simply to add iodine to common salt.

Almost 60 nations are expected to have iodised salt by the end of the century and another 32 could do so with a big effort over the next year. "This is significant, practical progress," Mr. Adamson said.

Malnutrition has been reduced, immunisation levels are generally being maintained or increased, measles deaths are down by 80 per cent, large areas of the developing world are free of polio, vitamin A deficiency is being overcome and the use of oral rehydration therapy is rising, UNICEF said.

All the Western hemisphere has been free of polio for at least three years, UNICEF says. East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa are now working to free themselves of the polio virus. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that in 1983 there were almost 400,000 new cases of polio and by 1994 the total had fallen to just over 100,000.

Measles, diarrhea and pneumonia — which account for over half of all child deaths in the developing world — can be countered with relatively simple and inexpensive solutions such as antibiotics, oral rehydration therapy (ORT), or vaccination. Child deaths from measles are down from three million in the mid-1980s to about one million and more than one million deaths from dehydration are being prevented each year with ORT.

There is little progress in the fight against pneumonia, however, UNICEF said, and a major worldwide effort against pneumonia should be undertaken before the end of the decade.

Mr. Adamson pointed out that emergencies and natural disasters are not the major cause of malnutrition in the developing world.

"The real problem is hidden malnutrition," he said. "The main cause is repeated illnesses, not the lack of food in the house. Pneumonia, measles or diarrhoea drain away nutrition or burn up nutrients. Protection against measles or diarrhoea make a bigger contribution to nutritional health than one realises."

The report also calls attention to children caught in armed conflicts and the new international ethic that is required to care for and protect those children.

Over the past 10 years approximately 2 million children have died in wars, between 4 and 5 million have been physically disabled, more than 5 million have been forced into refugee camps, and more than 12 million have been left homeless, UNICEF said.

Discussing the recent tragedy in Rwanda, the report said: "What kind of adults will they be, these millions of children who have been traumatised by mass violence, who have been denied the opportunity to develop normally in mind and body, who have been deprived of homes and parents, of family and community, of identity and security, of schooling and stability?

"What scars will they carry forward into their own adult lives? And what kind of contribution will they be making to their societies in 15 or 20 years from now?"

United States Information Agency.

Rioting Shiites — an oppressed majority in Bahrain

NICOSIA (AFP) — Shiite Muslims who rioted for five days this week form an underprivileged and restless majority in Bahrain after two centuries of Sunni Muslim rule.

The Bahraini government says the archipelago's Shiites only represent 35 per cent of the population, but Western diplomats have put the figure at more than 55 per cent.

They are banned from the army and police, suffer the worst unemployment rates in Bahrain and take no part in the country's government.

The riots in several Bahraini cities this week were a sign of the "growing discontent among the Shiite population which feels wronged and frustrated," an Arab diplomat in the Gulf told AFP.

Many Bahraini Shiites have close links with Iran, the Shiite Muslim republic which dominated Bahrain in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Only five per cent, however, are of Persian origin. The rest are all of Arab stock.

As a result, not all Shiites support Iran's claim to Bahrain, which Tehran has put forward repeatedly this century and which has triggered several uprisings in Manama.

As the British protectorate in Bahrain drew to a close in 1971, the United Nations sent a team there at Iran's request to find out what sort of government the population wanted.

It concluded that "almost all" Bahrainis wanted an independent Arab state.

The Al Khalifa dynasty currently ruling the Gulf state took control in 1783 and allowed the Shiite Muslims among the population freedom of worship.

The Shiites lived mostly in the countryside on the 35 islands which make up the state as farmers and fishers of pearls, for which Bahrain was famous before cultured pearls became widespread in the Far East.

When oil was discovered in 1932, the Shiites formed the bulk of the labouring class.

They became active in demanding better economic, social and political conditions without ever drawing up their own particular agenda.

Shiites took part in the ruthlessly suppressed strikes of 1938, 1954, 1956 and 1965, and the stoppages spread out between 1972 and 1975.

Their MPs, considered as extremists, played a large part in the Bahraini emir's decision to dismiss the country's last national assembly in 1975. Emir Sheikh Issa Ben Salman Al Khalifa blamed MP for "obstructing" the government's work.

A 30-member consultative council was appointed by the emir in 1992 but it only has an advisory role and no legislative powers.

Rioters this week demanded the release of Shiite Muslim leader Sheikh Ali Salman, arrested after calling for the restoration of parliamentary life in Bahrain.

The sheikh returned to Bahrain a few months ago from the holy Shiite city of Qom in Iran where he had been studying theology.

Shiite Muslims also aroused government hostility after a string of demonstrations or plots in favour of Iran's claim to Bahrain, which the shah had not renounced until 1975 and which the new regime in Tehran revived after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

In September 1979, at the instigation of Iranian Shiites, Bahrainis staged demonstrations against the emir.

Two years later around 100 Shiites were arrested in Bahrain on charges of supporting an Iranian-backed plot to overthrow the government, according to Manama. Another plot was uncovered in 1985.

In recent years, the gradual exhaustion of oil reserves and the growth of rival economic and commercial centres in the region has triggered economic decline in Bahrain.

Unemployment has risen and has hit the Shiite Muslim workforce hardest.

As political parties and trade unions are banned, Shiite militants have formed underground opposition parties often based abroad.

One such group is the pro-Iranian Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, which regularly stages demonstrations for the release of political prisoners.

N. Korea unlikely to escalate helicopter incident

By Moon Ihlwan
Reuter

SEOUL — The U.S. helicopter that was forced down in North Korea after straying into the Communist territory handed North Korea a trump card in its relations with the United States, analysts and diplomats said on Sunday.

But they said the Stalinist north was not expected to seek to escalate Saturday's incident into a major crisis.

"North Korea scored a major political achievement in the nuclear deal with the United States — Washington's recognition which it needs to break out of decades-old isolation," said Koh Tae-Woo, chief analyst at the Institute of North Korea Studies.

"Pyongyang will try to get more from the United States over the helicopter incident but the last thing it wants is to scuttle the nuclear deal," he said.

U.S. officials said it was unclear whether the helicopter, on a routine training mission when it strayed into North Korean airspace, made an emergency landing or was shot down.

North Korea on Sunday repeated a statement that it shot down a U.S. helicopter intruding into its territory, but Mr. Koh said he believed the report was mainly targetted at a domestic audience.

"The north wants to show its people its vigilance and strength but it will probably release the pilots soon," he said.

Analysts said Pyongyang was also quick to indicate the two pilots were alive by saying they were being questioned.

The incident had threatened to sour relations between the United States and North Korea which had improved dramatically following an October agreement under which Pyongyang agreed to build new nuclear power facilities that would almost eliminate the possibility of it producing weapons-grade plutonium.

Under the deal signed in Geneva, the U.S. promised to provide North Korea with modern light-water nuclear reactors costing $4 billion and badly-needed interim energy supplies.

Michael Breen, a North Korean expert at the Seoul-based Merit Communications, said both Washington and Pyongyang had a lot to lose if the nuclear deal, described as a foreign policy triumph by the Clinton administration, were to collapse.

The United States and North Korea have been holding talks to set up liaison offices in one another's capitals as a first step towards diplomatic relations.

"The North Koreans would think the best way to use the incident is to accelerate the reconciliation," Mr. Breen said. "I don't think this incident jeopardised the Geneva agreement."

The Geneva agreement ended a two-year crisis over Western suspicions that the north was planning to build nuclear weapons, which brought the Korean peninsula to brink of war.

"The helicopter incident set the stage for more swapping of bargaining chips between North Korea and the United States," an Asian diplomat said.

U.S. military officials said Washington had been in contact with Pyongyang through a variety of channels to press North Korea to provide information and return the helicopter pilots.

U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson, who happened to visit North Korea on Saturday in time to deal with the incident, held talks with top North Korean government and parliament leaders in Pyongyang on Sunday.

Mr. Richardson would act as a conduit between Washington and Pyongyang, his spokesman in Washington said. He cancelled planned discussions on the recent nuclear pact.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher had also contacted the North Korean U.N. mission, U.S. officials said.

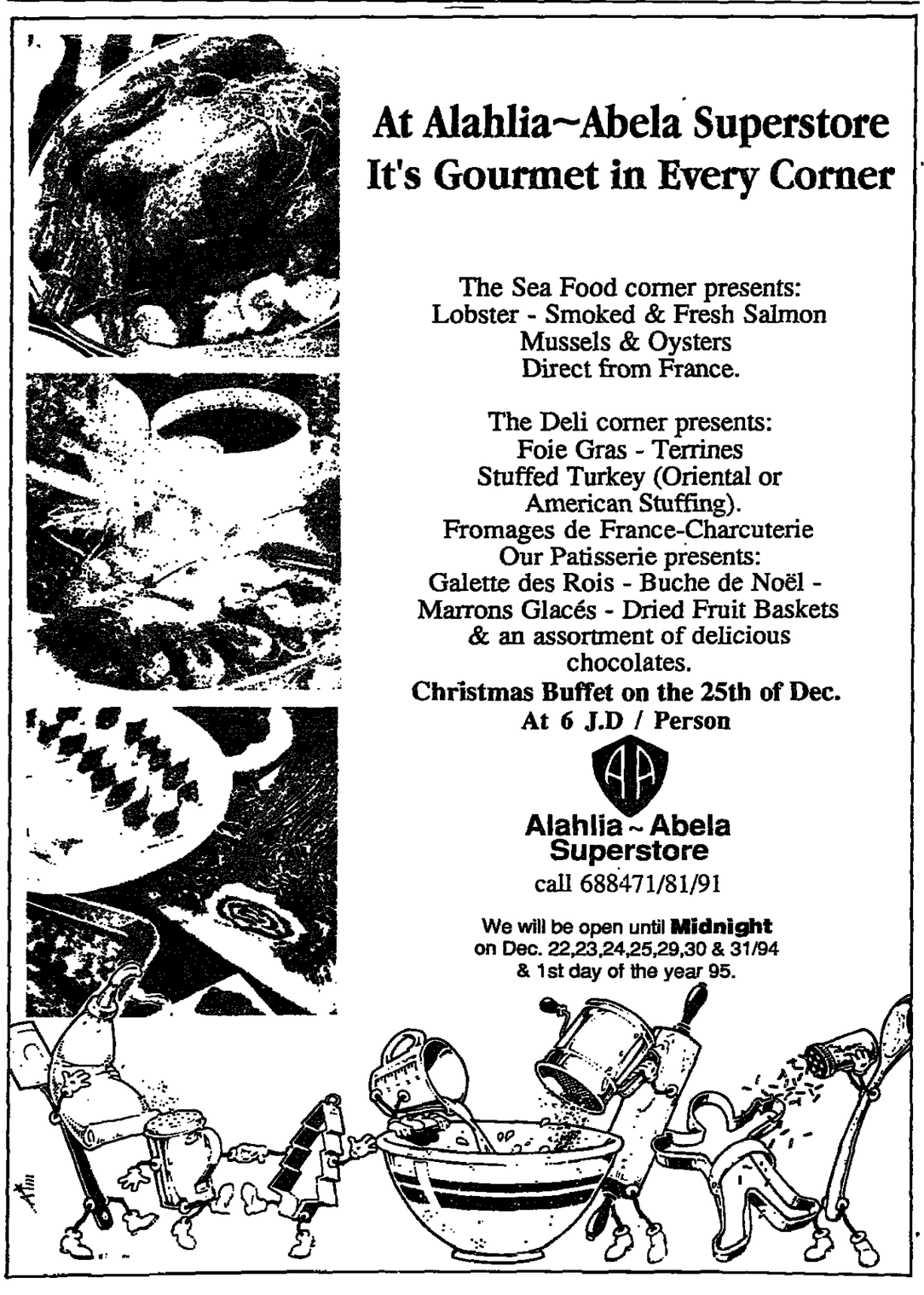
In January 1968, North Korea seized a U.S. navy vessel, the Pueblo, with 84 seamen aboard, in international waters off the peninsula's east coast. Nearly 11 months later, 82 crew members were released.

Mr. Koh said the Pueblo seizure occurred at the height of the north's campaign for an end to what it called U.S. imperialism.

"North Korea has repeatedly said it wants closer ties with Washington. This is their chance to show that they mean it," said Mr. Koh.

Jim Coles, spokesman for the U.S. military in South Korea said the situation had changed dramatically since the Pueblo incident.

"It was a very different world with a different relationship between the two countries," Pyongyang and the U.S. military were negotiating for the return of pilots "in a calm, professional manner," he said.



Japan to cut spending for first time in 40 years

TOKYO (Agencies) — Japan's finance ministry, faced with slumping tax revenues, Monday proposed an austere national budget for next fiscal year that would cut spending for the first time in 40 years.

Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura unveiled a draft budget totalling 70.99 trillion yen ($710 billion) for the year starting on April 1, 1995, down from the 73.08 trillion yen ($731 billion) budget for the current fiscal year.

The budget, which includes subsidies to regional governments and debt repayment costs, would fall for the first time since 1955/56, when it dropped 0.8 per cent.

"We have mapped out allocations for truly necessary spending, while drafting an austere budget," Mr. Takemura told a news conference.

Japan's economic slump, the most severe since World War II, has cut tax revenues sharply and forced the government to issue budget-balancing public bonds in 1994/95 for the first time in five years.

A modest recovery in the economy took hold this year, but tax revenues are expected to remain sluggish.

The ministry said it plans to restrict general spending, the core of the budget, to 42.14 trillion yen ($421 billion), a rise of just 3.1 per cent from funds earmarked for 1994/95.

It urged the government to tighten controls over state spending under what it called "extraordinary financial conditions" stemming from weak tax revenues.

In order to cope with the financial squeeze, Japan will take the "unusual" step in 1995/96 of suspending its payment to the ministry's sinking fund, a pool of money set aside to redeem government debt, the ministry said.

Japan's tax revenue is expected to total 53.73 trillion yen ($537 billion) in 1995/96, little changed from 53.67 trillion yen ($537 billion) projected for 1994/95.

National revenues other than taxes are forecast to total 4.49 trillion yen ($44.9 billion), down from 5.6 trillion yen ($56.0 billion) for 1994/95.

Mr. Takemura said his ministry would try to curb the issue of bonds.

But under his draft, the government would issue 12.60 trillion yen ($126 billion) in new public bonds, which would account for 17.7 per cent of the total budget, and compares with a projected 13.64 trillion yen ($136 billion) for 1994/95.

The ministry will present its proposals to the cabinet on Dec. 20. The government will then prepare a final budget on Dec. 25 after talks between the finance ministry and other ministries, and submit it early next month to parliament for final approval.

On the monetary side, Bank of Japan governor Yasuo Matsushita told his inaugural news conference Monday that the Japanese economy is recovering "very slowly."

news conference Monday.

The new central bank governor also said that nonperforming loans by Japanese commercial banks were "peaking out," although it would still be a "long time" before the problem is resolved.

"The economy is recovering very slowly," Mr. Matsushita, who replaced Yasushi Mieno, said at the weekend.

Noting several factors of uncertainty, including a break in the recovery of consumer spending, continued adjustments in company balance sheets and stockpiled investories, he said: "We are not in a situation to be optimistic without reserve."

"Bad loans are peaking out," he said. "But if you ask me if there has been a rapid improvement (in bank balance sheets), I'm not in a position to say so with confidence. There would be problems for these assets to be securitised. Disposal of real estate has not been very active because of the sluggish real estate market.

"Therefore we have to think it will take a long time," the central bank governor said. "This is one of my important tasks."

Mr. Matsushita is a former chairman of Sakura Bank Ltd. but previously worked in the finance ministry where he held the top administrative post of vice minister before moving to the private sector.

Asked about the central bank's monetary policy, he suggested there would be no immediate change. "The economy's future course is unclear, but I do not believe there would be a major change," he said.

He said he would like to carry out his duties "with a firm faith" to fulfill the central bank's mission of stabilising prices and financial systems.

Mr. Matsushita said he held the same basic view as his predecessor, Mr. Mieno, on international monetary cooperation, with each country's macroeconomic measures for sustaintable economic growth without inflation contributing to monetary stability.

He refrained from making direct comments on the central bank's measure announced earlier this month that it would join private banks in setting up a new 40-billion yen ($400 million) bank to take over two credit unions troubled by excessive loans to real estate dealers of the "bubble" era.

Russia acts to control dollars in circulation

MOSCOW (R) — Twice as many cash dollars as roubles are in circulation in Russia and the central bank is stepping up measures to control and reduce them, a bank official has said.

"If the giant dollar bulk starts sloshing around it will be like a bull in a China shop. There are too many dollars here," said Viktor Melnikov, head of the central bank's main department for currency regulation and control.

He declined to say how many dollars were in circulation.

Mr. Melnikov said at a briefing the bank had introduced rules, in force from the beginning of October, to provide better control over commercial banks' activities and limit the influx of foreign cash.

One of the new controls would be a certificate, drawn up by the central bank, to be filled in by bank officials after each buy or sell operation involving foreign currency cash.

"We need direct forms of monitoring. All deals will be registered in this new way, put into a special cash machine in a bank and the data passed to a central computer. We are taking the best from Western countries' experience," said Mr. Melnikov.

He also said the bank was worried by the high number of unlicensed exchange booths, nearing 9,000 in Moscow alone, compared with 2,100 registered exchange offices.

"There are no ways to monitor deals there. Dirty currency comes in suitcases and is registered as bought in these booths," he said.

Previously, the central bank required registration of deals only above $10,000. The new certificates are protected from forgery and cannot be copied, Mr. Melnikov said. Banks will have to buy them directly from the mint.

"We heard that some intermediaries are already appearing, wanting to sell the new certificates. But we want to tell everyone that only those bought from the Goznak (mint) are legal," Mr. Melnikov said.

Mr. Melnikov said huge amount of dollars in Russia was a matter of concern in the West. He said that between January and October, hard currency influx totalled $15 billion, while $103 million had been taken out of the country.

"Many countries are worried now that Russia is an easy place to launder money. Americans are worried that too many dollars are concentrated here. They might take measures against us if Russia doesn't put a stop to it," said Mr Melnikov.

Bundesbank: German deficits fall but labour costs too much

FRANKFURT (AFP) — German deficits should meet the limits in the Maastricht treaty next year but the government should use growth to cut them further as a cushion against future recession, the Bundesbank said Tuesday.

Economic recovery had accelerated since the middle of the year and unemployment had improved unexpectedly quickly but the labour market remained beset by profound problems such as high wages, the bank said in its monthly report.

Inflation in the west of the country, which had risen sharply at the beginning of this year owing to an increase in tax on oil products, might fall to less than 2.5 per cent at the beginning of next year.

This would be close to the target set by the bank of 2.0 per cent.

The bank, which had repeatedly warned the government about the dangers of the increase in budget deficits owing to the cost of unification, and aventually increased short-term rates to control the money supply, said that the deficit would probably fall by 20 billion marks ($12.6 billion) this year to about 115 billion marks.

A deficit of 115 billion marks would be equivalent to about 3.5 per cent of GDP.

In 1995 the deficit would amount to three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) which is the maximum limit permitted under the Maastricht treaty for economic and political union within the European Union.

The social security account was likely to show a small surplus of 1.5 billion marks compared to a deficit of 3.5 billion marks in 1993.

If the deficit of the Treuhandanstalt agency for privatisation in the east of the country were included, the debtl ration would be four per cent in 1994 from 5.25 per cent in 1993 and might amount to 100 billion marks in 1995.

The public debt, excluding the amounts owed by the Treuhandanstalt, would amoutn to 50 per cent of GDP at the end of 1994. The limit under Maastricht is 60 per cent.

But even this year, using the calculation which excluded deficits of state companies as laid down by the treaty, the deficit would amount to less than 3.0 per cent of GDP. On inclusion of losses by state enterprises the ratio would be 3.5 per cent and with the deficit of the Treuhandanstalt it would be 4.0 per cent

The improvement expected next year flowed mainly from increases in taxation and an increase in tax revenue resulting from the recovery.

The Bundesbank said that the rate of increase in state spending should be less than the rate of growth of GDP next year.

The government should use growth to reduce the deficit so that even during recession the budget deficit would not exceed three per cent of GDP.

Taxes on companies and individuals should be reduced, but only in tandem with reductions in expenditure.

Growth had accelerated since the middle of the year and "nearly all of the main economic indicators are showing green," the bank said.

GDP in the west of the country had risen by 1.5 per cent in the third quarter from the figure for the second quarter and by 2.5 per cent from the figure for the third quarter of last year.

"During the last 20 years Germany has emerged from each recession with a 'base' of additional unemployed people."

This showed that the German labour market suffered from profound problems such as high wage rates, difference between pay bands in the same industry which were too small, obstacles to mobility and a lack of qualifications.

Competition minimises role of Singapore as gold centre

SINGAPORE (R) — Singapore's traditional role as a regional gold distributing centre faces a challenge as neighbouring countries move to free their gold markets, industry officials and gold traders said.

Malaysia and Indonesia, notably, removed some restrictions on gold imports while others like Pakistan and India are also likely to adopt more reforms, they said.

For the 10 months to October, Singapore's gold bar and coin imports totalled 225.92 tonnes and dealers expect full-year imports to stay flat, near 1993's 297 tonnes.

In 1992, Singapore's gold imports hit a record 415 tonnes, according to the World Gold Council (WGC). Other main distribution centres in Asia are Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

Industry watchers attribute the fall in imports to other countries in the region directly importing gold.

"Singapore will be facing competition, but because of its inherent advantage, it will continue to be a gold distribution centre," Gan Tjoen Hok, executive director at Republic National Bank New York (Singapore) told Reuters last week.

"In a couple of year's time, for example, it would be routine to send gold directly to Indonesia," one dealer said.

Indonesia this year removed a 10 per cent value-added tax on gold which, according to a WGC official, came after substantial lobbying by the council and the Indonesian jewellery trade.

Instead, the Indonesian jewellery trade will pay a 10 per cent VAT on the added value, such as fabrication costs, the official said.

Indonesia's imported gold bullion will also be no longer subjected to a 10 per cent tax, expected to be implemented within a few months once new procedures are established, the WGC said.

Malaysia abolished a five per cent import tax on gold bullion and gold coins in July 1993.

This was also after intense lobbying by the WGC and the Federation of Goldsmiths and Jewellery Association of Malaysia.

In Pakistan, moves are also being made to free gold trading and the government has said it will act to halt gold smuggling by allowing certain firms to import it, dealers said.

India, one of the world's largest gold jewellery markets, has also lifted curbs on gold imports in the alst two years, allowing non-resident Indians to bring in the metal.

And, it has allowed exporters earning foreign exchange to import gold with special licences.

Belarus seeks $720m in international help

WASHINGTON (R) — Belarus has appealed for international support for a far-reaching programme to stabilise and transform its shaky economy and plug an estimated $720 million foreign financing gap next year.

"We are seeking financial and political support," Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich told Reuters.

Mr. Myasnikovich said Belarus thas already won the backing of senior staff from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for its plan to sharply reduce inflation and overhaul its battered economy.

The IMF's board is slated to meet on Dec. 21 to translate that backing into hard cash. Up for a consideration: $254 million "standby" loan and a $102 million "systemic transformation facility" credit for the country.

Belarus central bank chairman Stanislav Bogdankevich said that Minsk is also interested in obtaining additional financing for a special fund to stabilise its currency.

Minsk is pressing ahead with an ambitious economic programme which it hopes will help win international support.

The programme, worked out in conjunction with IMF staff, envisages a steep reduction in inflation from a monthly rate of some 50 per cent in the middle of this year to one per cent or less by the end of next year.

Under the plan, Minsk will keep tight control of its budget, limiting the deficit next year to the equivalent of four per cent of the economy's gross domestic product.

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ALL WE WANT FOR CHRISTMAS.
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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1994

By Thomas S Person Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES. Concentrate on the personal side of your life and restore your energies under the double moon trine to Pluto and Jupiter. Study that enterprise that interests you from a different angle.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may find yourself arguing over some business affair if you don't give it further study first before making any immediate decisions

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You are apt to get into a big quarrel with a partner because you do not agree on something so keep calm for the moment and use tact.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Try not to disagree with fellow assocaites because you have different views. Make sure you safeguard your reputation from any harm.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You and a friend may disagree about some pleasure, but it is best to compromise. Avoid an argument with your mate.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Take care you do not disagree with those at home otherwise a big fuss can ensue and reconciliation would be difficult later.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Find a better way of handling those who do not agree with your ideas and gain their cooperation. Drive with care while on the highway.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A financial expert and you may see things differently on some matters, so postpone coming to any definite decision about a new project.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Find the right means through whcih you and allies can handle problematical affairs much better. This is not a good time for the social side of life.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Don't make the mistake of trying to belittle others or you could get into trouble easily. Think along constructive lines.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You don't understand why you don't get a personal wish granted, don't argue with a bigwig if that is the way it is going to be.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You may not agree with one in power, but you could get into big trouble if you voice your views. Enjoy some hobby in the evening.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You want to be off to new sites and interests but could get into trouble if you don't keep your part of any agreements already made.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise - Zircon

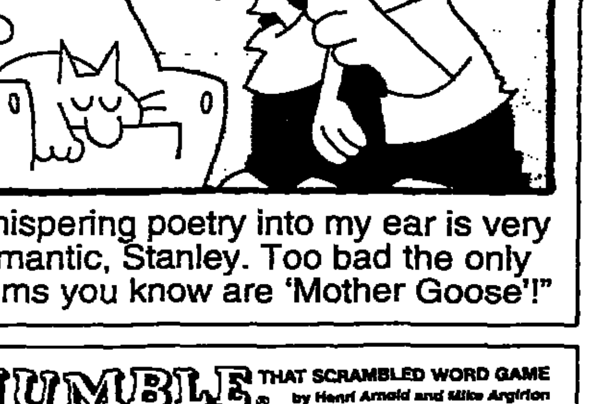
Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

THE BETTER HALF®

By Glasbergen



"Whispering poetry into my ear is very romantic, Stanley. Too bad the only poems you know are 'Mother Goose'!"

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

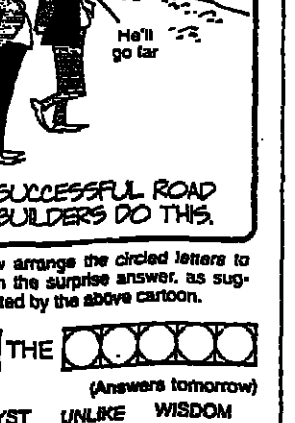
Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

YOMEN

ROBOK

GURTED

ZAHDAR



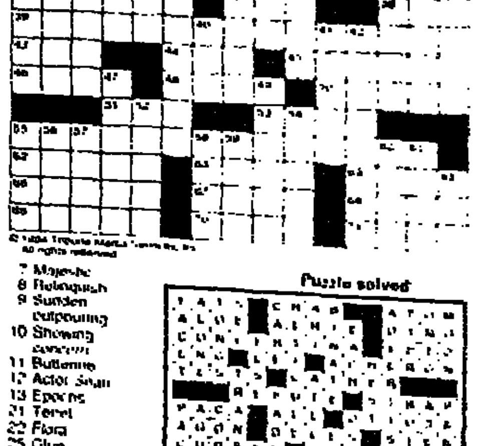
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: ◯◯◯◯◯ THE ◯◯◯◯◯◯

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's | Jumbles: CEASE TRYST UNLIKE WISDOM
Answer: Breakfast jam on the morning paper can become this — A STICKY ISSUE

THE Daily Crossword by Dorothy Martin



ACROSS
1 Controversy
5 Actor Guinness
9 Extent
14 Island off Scotland
15 Bishop of Rome
16 Less ruddy
17 Small fry
18 Foray
19 Playing field
20 Erroneous notions
23 Sea eagle
24 Author Deighton
25 Armed band
28 Artist Bonheur
31 Sudden, short breath
35 Rater (to)
37 Vat
38 Neither's partner
39 Lapsus linguae
43 Ascot
44 Exclamation of disapproval
45 Booths
46 Architect Saarinen
48 Concerning
50 Lock of hair
51 Actress Ryan
53 Swerve
55 Shakespeare play (with "The")
62 Like an old woman
63 Peeled
64 Homeless child
66 Lorelei, e.g.
67 Choir member
68 Pound
69 Tangles
70 Endure
71 Orchestra member

DOWN
1 — as a fiddle
2 Weaver's machine
3 Opposed
4 Rejects, as an opportunity
5 Kitchen wear
6 Something given temporarily
7 Majestic
8 Relinquish
9 Sudden outpouring
10 Showing concern
11 Buttonite
12 Actor Sean
13 Epochs
21 Terret
22 Flora
25 Glue
26 North
27 More roguish
29 Different
30 Be a plaintiff
32 Point of view
33 Human beings
34 Weigh heavily upon
36 Representation of someone disliked
40 Cookie sheet
41 Playful aquatic mammal
42 Not as wide
47 Breakfast order
49 Happenings
52 Blissful abodes
54 Plant disease
55 Large container
56 — years (elderly)
57 Mother Goose
58 —
59 Dispatch
60 Diversify
61 Beget
65 Glaze

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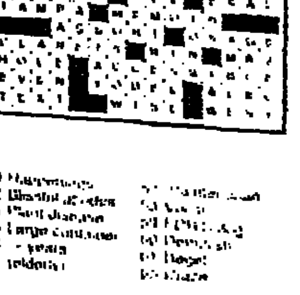
Puzzle solved



Business Daily Beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Dairy producers threaten stoppage

☆☆ Ten dairy producers will halt production and stop accepting fresh milk from farmers from Dec. 28 if the ministry does not agree to their demands to raise prices. The dairy producers complain of grievances dating back to 1990. Citing the price freeze by the Ministry of Supply, higher costs of production inputs, rising inflation, the introduction of the sales tax and the rejection of the officials to the requests for a fair price, the dairy producers are now demanding not only the adjustment of prices but also a full compensation of their losses for not being allowed to amend the prices since 1990 (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ A specialised Japanese team has started to conduct a comprehensive and on-the-field study to upgrade the efficiency of the Aqaba Port. The study, which was requested by Jordan from the Japanese government and the Japanese Agency for International Assistance, aims at drawing a comprehensive plan for the port until the year 2010 in addition to the scheme drawn by the Ports Corporation to upgrade the efficiency of the port in the short-term. Financed by Japan and expected to last until February 1996, the study will look into the possibility of expanding certain projects, building new wharves and weighing the participation of the private sector in setting up warehouses, jetties and new big yards. The study includes the introduction of computers in the areas of management, unloading and handling cargoes as well as relocating all phosphate-loading equipment from the main port to the industrial port on the southern coast. The Aqaba Port extends for a length of approximately 27 kilometres (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ The 1995 budget for the Governorate of Ma'an total JD12,043,000 (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ The Central Bank of Jordan auctioned JD15 million ($21.36 million) of certificates of deposit (CDs) to banks last week. Interest rates remained unchagned at 7.75 per cent for three months and 7.93 per cent for six months. Bankers note that the high liquidity at the banks was manifested in full coverage of the CD's offered with demand being 2.5 times greater than supply (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ Lentils are in ample supply at the warehouses of the Ministry of Supply and any merchant or citizen can obtain any amount without delay. The fixed price of a kilogramme of lentils is 500 fils (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ The 15-member committee studying a revised companies' law is expected to finalise its review after two months when it will be ready in its final form to be presented to the Council of Ministers. The committee, which comprises 13 members from the private sector, had been meeting twice a week since March with some sessions going on for five or six hours each. The committee has until now finished discussing 77 articles out of 321 articles of the current companies law which was enacted in 1989 (Al Dustour).

☆☆ Poultry farmers are complaining of difficulties in obtaining yellow corn from the Ministry of Supply to feed their chicken. They say that the ministry has limited the amount of yellow corn they were to receive and restricted them to specific hours of delivery. Moreover, the ministry is demanding that the farmers bring their farming licence. An informed source attributed the new measures to low stocks of yellow corn at the warehouses of the ministry which holds a monopoly to import the

U.S. firm setting up $81 million joint mining venture in Saudi Arabia

DUBAI (R) — A U.S. firm, Arabian Shield Development Co. (ASDC), is setting up an $81 million joint mining venture in Saudi Arabia to produce copper, zinc, gold and silver, the first of its kind in the Gulf, its president said.

Hatem Al Khalidi, ASDC's president and chief executive, Monday said the company was finalising the legal paperwork to set up "Arabian Shield Mining Company," as a 50-50 joint venture between his company and Saudi investors.

The joint venture would be a subsidiary of ASDC, he said.

He told Reuters in a telephone interview from Jeddah the venture would develop the Al Masanei mine in southwest Saudi Arabia which Arabian Shield has leased from the Saudi government.

He said a feasibility study showed that the mine contains zinc and copper concentrates, gold and silver. "The area, according to the study, is extremely favourable for discovering much much more ore."

Production was expected to start by mid-1996 with a yearly output of 58,000 tonnes of zinc concentrates with 54 per cent zinc per tonne and 35,000 tonnes of copper concentrates with 25 per cent copper per tonne.

"The mine has proven reserves of 7.2 million tonnes and about one million tonnes of possible reserves, containing 1.42 per cent copper, 5.2 per cent zinc, 1.19 grammes of gold and 40 grammes of silver per tonne," Mr. Khalidi said.

Shares would be offered to the public in a few months and the company would be traded on the Saudi stock market, he said.

"This will be the first mine of its kind in the Arabian Peninsula to produce all these minerals," Mr. Khalidi said.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 16/12/94	Tokyo Close Date 19/12/94
Sterling Pound*	1.5605	1.5593**
Deutsche Mark	1.5728	1.5768
Swiss Franc	1.3329	1.3364**
French Franc	5.4235	5.4375**
Japanese Yen	100.38	100.23
European Curreny Unit	1.2125	1.2089**

* USD Per STG
** European Opening at 8.00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates Date: 19/12/1994

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.87	6.06	6.62	7.06
Sterling Pound	5.75	6.12	6.68	7.25
Deutsche Mark	5.18	5.18	5.31	5.62
Swiss Franc	3.75	4.00	4.31	4.62
French Franc	5.37	5.81	6.12	6.56
Japanese Yen	2.18	2.25	2.31	2.43
European Currency Unit	6.18	6.31	6.50	7.00

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals Date: 19/12/1994

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	379.00	7.60	Silver	4.78	0.105

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 19/12/1994

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7030	0.7050
Sterling Pound	1.0953	1.1008
Deutsche Mark	0.4454	0.4476
Swiss Franc	0.5255	0.5281
French Franc	0.1292	0.1298
Japanese Yen*	0.6992	0.7031
Dutch Guilder	0.3980	0.4000
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira*	0.0427	0.0429
Belgian Franc	*****	******

* Per 100

Other Currencies Date: 19/12/1994

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8490	1.8620
Lebanese Lira*	0.04129	0.04260
Saudi Riyal	0.1862	0.1880
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3000	2.3600
Qatari Riyal	0.1919	0.1932
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2150
Omani Riyal	1.8070	1.8260
UAE Dirham	0.1908	0.1917
Greek Drachma*	0.2810	0.3915
Cypriot Pound	1.3990	1.5310

* Per 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

U.S. $1.00 costs	1.3918/28	Canadian dollar
	1.5750/60	Deutschemarks
	1.7634/44	Dutch guilders
	1.3340/50	Swiss francs
	32.37/41	Belgian francs
	5.4295/45	French francs
	1648.6/9.6	Italian lire
	100.25/35	Japanese yen
	7.5525/25	Swedish crowns
	6.8720/70	Norwegian crowns
	6.1775/25	Danish crowns
One sterling	$1.5586/96	
One ounce of gold	$378.90/379.40	

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 19/12/1994

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK	600	110200	183.750	183.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	2600	11505	4.420	4.430
BANK OF JORDAN	200	764	3.810	3.810
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	4750	14155	2.980	2.980
THE HOUSING BANK	1400	7650	5.550	5.450
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	3212	9667	3.010	3.010
JORDAN GULF BANK	7000	11480	1.640	1.640
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	5350	19449	3.630	3.660
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	200	1000	5.000	5.000
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	20000	98500	4.900	4.900
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	9250	13968	1.520	1.510
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	500	845	1.710	1.690
BANKS SECTOR	55062	299183	INDEX NUMBER: 158.72	CHANGE : -0.18%
THE NATIONAL AHLIA INSURANCE	1600	4800	3.000	3.000
AL-NISR AL-ARABI INSURANCE	550	2368	4.100	4.310
INSURANCE SECTOR	2150	7168	INDEX NUMBER: 136.63	CHANGE : +0.44%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	850	1317	1.550	1.550
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER /NEW	8100	12278	1.510	1.520
JORDAN HIMMEH MINERAL	300	540	1.710	1.800
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	9100	45500	5.200	5.000
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	40050	128162	3.230	3.200
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	540	1310	2.440	2.430
JORDAN GULF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	4150	5395	1.290	1.300
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2000	2140	1.070	1.070
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	529	1295	2.450	2.450
JORDANIAN EXPATRIATES INVESTMENT HOLDING	250	338	1.380	1.350
SERVICES SECTOR	65869	198274	INDEX NUMBER: 130.35	CHANGE : -1.02%
ATTANQEEP CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	100	127	1.260	1.270
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	57450	167745	2.920	2.920
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	1632	4419	2.670	2.780
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	1850	9366	5.000	5.100
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	1640	15242	9.240	9.290
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	2317	18314	8.000	7.950
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	7150	39418	5.600	5.500
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	180	3110	17.400	17.250
ARAB INVESTMENT & INERNATIONAL TRADE	650	657	1.010	1.010
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	2850	19830	6.950	7.000
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	4282	3981	.940	.930
GENERAL INVESTMENT	300	975	3.250	3.250
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	750	1043	1.390	1.390
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	878	3728	4.230	4.320
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1500	4363	2.920	2.910
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	600	935	1.550	1.560
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JIMCO	1050	890	.850	.850
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1700	4692	2.760	2.760
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	5550	14663	2.650	2.640
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	92504	313855	INDEX NUMBER: 128.77	CHANGE : +0.56%
GRAND TOTAL	215585	818480	INDEX NUMBER: 144.21	CHANGE : +0.04%

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 37038
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 44337

Arab states urged to adapt to world accounting norms

DUBAI (R) — Financial authorities in the Arab World should use international accounting standards only as a benchmark, and should rather adapt to them to suit their countries' specific conditions, a leading chartered accountant said.

"These standards have to be reviewed in order to add a national perspective," Arab Society of Certified Accountants President Talal Abu Ghazaleh told Reuters in an interview.

Mr. Abu Ghazaleh was speaking in particular about an international accounting regulation called IAS30 which Arab banks are under strong pressure to apply and which is supposed to regulate the wawy they and other financial institutions make disclosures in their financial statements.

He said this should be tailored to meet the needs of Arab countries, where culture, religion, the level of education and the public's perception of the role of banks differed markedly from those in the West, he said.

"For example, clients here expect their banks to give them investment advice. This is not expected in other countries," he pointed out.

Mr. Abu Ghazaleh, who heads one of the region's leading chartered accounting firms, said IAS30 did not take into consideration the different national and legislative requirements of the developing world.

"It needs to be adapted to meet Arab national requirements," he said.

IAS30 rules, in existence since 1991, require bank disclosure of such matters as the so-called related party transactions — transactions involving directors, majority shareholders and their families.

Although the banking sector was the most regulated of all economic sectors in the Arab World, most banks operating in Arab countries do not meet the key IAS30 rules.

Many central banks — like the United Arab Emirates central bank — are proposing adherence to IAS30, to bring regulations into line with global norms, and to improve the industry's credibility.

Cuba seeks foreign financing in sugar

HAVANA (R) — Cuba is seeking foreign financial to help its battered sugar cane industry, mostly to buy more fertilisers and pesticides, President Fidel Castro said.

President Castro, addressing a scientific forum, did not give details but said the investment was needed to boost the industry that produces the island's leading export.

Vice President Carlos Lage announced in late October that Cuba was open to foreign investment in all productive sectors, including the sugar industry. But details have not been made public of which foreign firms have been negotiating in the sector, or if any agreements have been reached.

Cuba's sugar growing was badly hit by the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and the old East Bloc. The 1993-94 harvest was just four million tonnes, down from a poor 4.2 million tonnes in 1992-93 and well below annual production that reached right million tonnes in the 1980s.

No official predictions have been made for the forthcoming harvest but it is widely expected to be as low as 3.5 million tonnes.

President Castro termed as "heroic" the job to be done bolstering the industry, noting the island still depended largely on earnings from the sector.

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A look back at 1994

Norwegians merit sporting glory

PARIS (AFP) — The sporting honours for 1994 must go to Norway for staging not only the most stirring Olympic Games but also the fairest.

When 300,000 people can cheer an Italian team which has just beaten the home side by fourth-tenths of a second in the most popular event in Norway — the men's cross-country skiing relay — then you know this country loves sport.

How many of the participants in 1994 could really say they were in it for anything but the money.

Ayrton Senna certainly demanded to be rewarded but he also raced for glory. Unfortunately, he drove into a brick wall at 200mph on May 1st — Labour Day — in San Marino.

Italian justice, and, perhaps, commercial interests have contrived to ensure the exact causes of his fatal crash are still not known.

Fortunately, Michael Schumacher, the youngest world champion, looks as if he possesses some of Senna's dashing bravado to ,excite moto racing fans for the next few years.

Matt Busby, the former Manchester United manager who died this year, was consumed by style and fair-play.

Brazil used to epitomise outrageous skill but Carlos Alberto Pareirra decided hard work rather than flair was the only way to win another World Cup.

Carlos Dunga's gritty midfield play typified this new Brazilian blend but without Romario, one of the game's mavericks, they would not have taken the Cup back to Rio.

Seven of the eight quarter-finalists in a surprisingly successful United States venture into World Cup football were from Europe but for all their tactical organisation the best sides relied on outstanding individuals to make the difference.

Bulgaria had Hristo Stoichkov, Romania had Gheorghe Hagi, Sweden had Tomas Brolin and Italy had Roberto Baggio. Unfortunately for Baggio, after dragging Italy to the final he fluffed his lines. His was the last kick of the 1994 World Cup final in Pasadena, sending the ball high over the cross-bar from a penalty.

And yet the side that played the most vibrant football, Argentina, sloped home in disgrace after Diego Maradona failed a test for the drug which had helped him regain his fitness.

If money is ruining sport, then there was no better example than in Colombia where the national side was apparently under mafia threat. Right-back Andres Escobar paid the ultimate price after scoring an own-goal. He was murdered by a gambling rocket's hired assassin when he arrived home.

If it's true that when you lose, you die a little — then Andre Agassi can certainly claim to have been reborn.

A year of setbacks was forgotten when he won the US Open.

It's not always easy to sympathise with Agassi but, like John McEnroe, the game would be a lot poorer without him.

Pete Sampras is both a superb player and chivalrous ... but a little dull. He won the Australian Open and Wimbledon but lost to Peru's Jaime Yzaga at Flushing Meadow when by all rights he should not have been on court.

He returned from injury to win the ATP Championship Finals and finished the year as world number one — the first man since Ivan Lendl in 1987 to retain the ranking through 12 months.

Martina Navratilova's decision to go after more than 20 years on the women's tour has left the game, still waiting for Monica Seles to come back after being stabbed by a spectator in 1993, without a major personality.

Steffi Graf's bad back has left her exposed. Aranxta Sanchez, in Paris and New York, and Conchita Martinez, at Wimbledon, took the major honours for Spain but the Spanish players do not draw crowds.

A lot is expected of fourteen-year-olds Martina Hingis and Venus Williams, who just miss the age-limit brought in by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) to safeguard teenagers.

Let's hope they don't go the same way as another teenage star Jennifer Capriati, another player who joined the tour as a fourteen-year-old. She spent the week in bed after losing in the first round at the 1993 U.S. Open and didn't play again until late in 1994.

"I just wanted to die. I was so fat and ugly," she was reported as saying.

During her absence from the game she was arrested first for shop-lifting and then ondrugs charges and underwent a rehabilitation course before staging a comeback.

Carl Lewis, who has won eight Olympic and eight world championship athletic gold medals, is missing from the rankings for the 100 metres and 200 metres for the first time in 10 years.

Most of the American stars will be 30 or over by the time the Atlanta Olympics come up in 18 months which may mean even more success for Africa.

coach Ma Junren's star pupil Wang Junxia looks an odds-on bet for a 10,000m gold medal at the 1995 world championships in Gothenburg.

World champion Noureddine Morceli of Algeria was unbeaten at the 1,500m and mile in 1994 and also set a stunning world record for 3,000m.

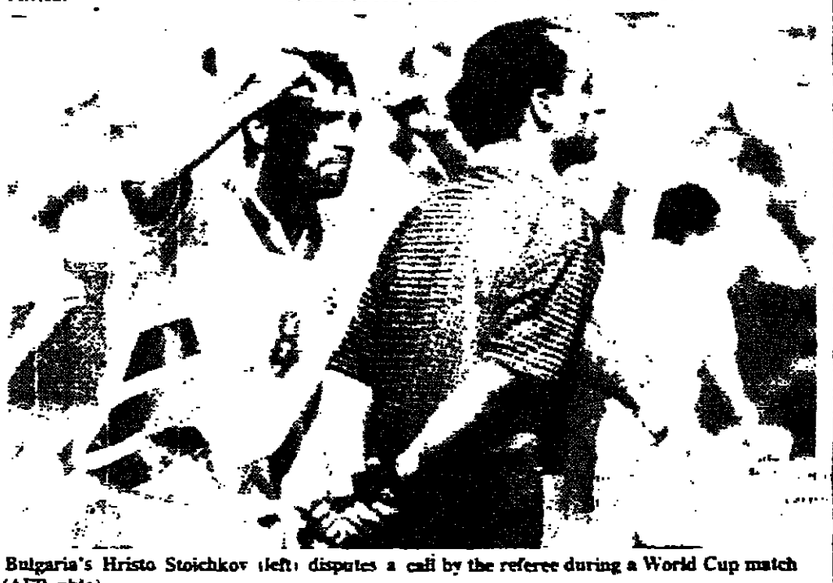
Ethiopia has won 13 Olympic medals but had not broken a world athletics record until Haile Gebresilasie

The graceful, easy-going Ottey reminds one of Wilma Rudolph who died of cancer this year at 54. Rudolph, told as a child she would never walk after being ill with polio, won three gold medals and equalled two world record in the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

Alexander Popov's 100m freestyle time of 48.21sec which beat Matt Biondi's four-year-old mark was one of 14 world swimming records broken in 1994.

Andre Agassi

Roberto Baggio



Bulgaria's Hristo Stoichkov (left) disputes a call by the referee during a World Cup match (AFP photo)

Randon dope testing in China has caught no big fish but it has been offered as an explanation for the slowdown in China's athletic progress.

China had only nine women in the distance rankings this year as opposed to their 47 in 1993, although ran a 12min. 56.92 sec. 5,000m in Holland. World cross country champion William Sigei of Kenya broke the 10,000m world record with 26:52.23 in Oslo in July.

Linford Christie of Britain and Merlene Ottey of Jamaica, both 34, believe they can win more honours at Gothenburg.

Leroy Burrell beat Lewis' world 100m record by running 9.85sec in Lausanne in July but could not get the better of Christie who also won his third successsive European and Commonwealth Games titles.

Ottey's 10.78, 100m in Paris in September equalled her four-year-old personal best and was only one hundredth of a second slower than world-leader Irina Privalova of Russia.

Steffi Graf

However, the biggest development in swimming was rise and apparent fall of China. Their women swimmers won 12 out of 16 events in the World Championships in Rome but seven of their competitors, including two Rome gold medallists, were later banned after failing drugs tests in the Asian Games in Japan.

Multi-millionaire owners and players in North American baseball and ice hockey shut down their sports in 1994, unable to agree on how to divide profits from a three billion-dollar industry.

George Foreman made a farce of professional boxing when he knocked out Michael Moorer in Las Vegas in November to become the oldest heavyweight champion in history at 45.

Moorer had never hidden the fact he was only interested in money.

Foreman lost the championship 20 years ago to Muhammad Ali who nowadays cannot cross the road unaided.

Arabi retain lead in Jordan handball

By Roufan Nabhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Al Arabi secured the lead after beating Yarmouk Shouneh 42/36 Sunday at Al Hassan Sport City in Irbid in the ninth week of the Kingdom's Handball Championship.

Arabi/Yarmouk Shouneh 42/36: In a fast beat match Al Arabi depending on Jamal and Moufaq Fateh Allah to penetrate Al Shouneh's defence and open the way for Moutasem Mansi and Ibrahim Buhain to score for Al Arabi who ended the first half 21-14.

In the second half, Al Shouneh doubled their effort and attacked depending on wings Hassan Horan and Mohammad Hussein who left behind a weak defence which gave Al Arabi's Mohammad Abu Lail and Moufaq Fateh Allah the opportunity to take control and end the match for Al Arabi 42/36.

Salt/Orthodoxi 30/28: Meanwhile Al Salt moved to the third place after beating Orthodoxi 30/28 at the Sports Palace in Amman.

Salt played with high spirits using Jihad Otaishat who played without any surveillance from any player from Orthodoxi to end the first half 14/11.

In the second half Orthodoxi concentrated on building more effective attacks to reach a tie several times but their weak defence and Al Salt's experience ended the match 30/28 for Al Salt.

Ahli/Hussein 25/9: In the 29 m. of the first half Al Hussein withdrew concerned about the heavy loss from Al Ahli especially after Hussein's Khaldoun Koufhi was send out

Al Ahli won 25/9.

In earlier matches Al Hussein beat Yarmouk Shounch 38/30 and Arabi defeated Salt 34/28.

Al Arabi and Al Ahli now top the standings with 16 points. Al Salt moved up to third and Al Hussein dropped to fourth.

Standings after 9th week

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts.
Arabi	8	8	—	—	254	204	16
Ahli	9	8	—	1	307	205	16
Salt	8	4	—	4	229	233	8
Hussein	9	3	1	5	239	256	7
Yarmouk	9	2	1	6	259	300	5
Ammon	7	2	—	5	172	197	4
Orthodoxi	8	1	—	7	206	271	3

☆ Ammon-Arabi have a postponed match.

NBA's tallest player is back

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Romanian giant Gheorghe Muresan, healed from a knee injury that sidelined him for nine games, might be just what the doctor ordered for the slumping Washington Bullets.

Muresan, who stands 2.32 metres, is the tallest player in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Improved play by Muresan and fellow centre Kevin Duckworth helped the Bullets win four of their first five games.

But Washington slid to 6-10 after Muresan went down against NBA leader Orlando with strained left knee ligaments.

The Bullets lost 122-101 at San Antonio in Muresan's return. He played only five minutes, scoring two points.

"I'm looking forward to coming back even stronger and winning lots of games," Muresan said. "After three weeks of rest and not practicing with the rest of the team."

"I might be a little out of shape, but I hope it will not be a problem. My knees are in good shape," he said.

Muresan, nicknamed "Tiny" by his teammates, has also had to adjust to new faces. The Bullets traded for last season's NBA rookie of the year, Chris Webber, and signed rookie Juwan Howard since Muresan was hurt.

"He's the tallest guy I've ever seen," Webber said of Muresan. "He comes up and rests his elbow on top of your head. He has gotten a bad rap from some folks. He really is a good player."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠K102 ♥AQ76 ♦AJ8 ♣AKJ
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?
A.—Here's our New Year's gift to you, along with our best wishes for a happy and healthy year—a grand slam on the first problem of the year. Add your 22 points to partner's minimum 15 or 16 and you come up with enough for the grand slam. Bid seven no trump.

Q.2—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠AJ6 ♥1098 ♦543 ♣Q743
The bidding has proceeded:
West North East South
1♦ 1♠ 2♦ ?
What action do you take?
A.—Treat partner's overcall as if it were an opening bid and respond accordingly. Had partner opened one spade, you would have been happy to raise, so bid two spades now.

Q.3—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠K52 ♥Q743 ♦762 ♣942
Partner opens the bidding with two no trump. What action do you take?
A.—If you still use a 22-24 point range, three no trump would be automatic. If your range is 21-22, we would have tried three clubs in an effort to find a heart fit had the hand contained any distributional feature. As it is we would be inclined to pass, but we agree the majority would still raise to three no trump.

Q.4—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠943 ♥K106 ♦KQ ♣Q10954
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Dbl ?
What action do you take?
A.—This hand is on the borderline between a raise to two spades and a redouble. With no honor card in partner's suit and only three-card support, we slightly prefer the more conservative raise.

Q.5—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠J5 ♥AK10532 ♦K8 ♣Q107
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Dbl ?
What action do you take?
A.—A jump to three hearts after a takeout double would be preemptive, two hearts would show a reasonable hand and not, but would not be forcing. The only way to describe a strong hand is to redouble, so take that action and then bid hearts next.

Q.6—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠832 ♥KJ109 ♦void ♣AJ9852
Partner opens the bidding with one diamond. What do you respond?
A.—If you play that a two over one response is a game force, your hand is not good enough for two clubs; respond one heart. If not, bid two clubs by all means. Your problem will come on the next round.

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Real Santa Claus Returns Home

The real Santa Claus, from Finland, concluded a five-day visit to Jordan. During his visit, Santa took part in a number of charity events to distribute gifts at charity organisations in the Kingdom as well as many public appearances for children at the Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan and Alahlia-Abela Superstore.

The trip was sponsored by Hotel Inter.Continental Jordan, British Airways, Pepsi, Alahlia-Abela Superstore. A drawing competition was organised in which dozens of children took part. The winner of the competition was Amer Al Majali, who won two return tickets to London on British Airways, and complimentary accommodation at the Hotel Inter.Continental London and $200 spending money from American Express.

Upon leaving the country, Santa Claus expressed his happiness for visiting Jordan and thanked the Jordanian public for their warm hospitality. "I'll be back next Christmas, in Shallah," he said. Santa carried with him Christmas card from the children of Jordan to the children of Finland.

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Nantes' Japhet N'Doram (left) and Caen Stephane Pedebant jump for the ball during their French League match (AFP photo)

Parma back on top

PARIS (AFP) — Parma returned to the top of the Italian league Sunday after a 2-1 victory at Bari, while overnight leaders Juventus were held to a disappointing 1-1 draw at home to Genoa.

Meanwhile unbeaten Nantes continued to set the pace in France, scoring a 2-0 win at Caen.

Missimoi Crippa scored Parma's winner in the 77th minute, after Gianfranco Zola had opened the scoring in the 12th and on-form Sandro Tovelieri had equalised with his eight of the season.

Juventus, one point further back on 30pts but with a game in hand, had been runaway favourites against a side which has only won three times this season.

It took Juventus a full 76 minutes to find the back of the net, through Fabrizio Ravanelli, but they were denied maximum points in the dying seconds when defender Fabio Galante grabbed the equaliser.

Galante ought to have been Genoa's second as their Japanese import Kazu Miura had earlier been given a clear shot at goal inside the area — but he blasted the ball over.

Argentina World Cup star Gabriel Batistuta's 14th goal of the season, from a 52nd minute penalty, earned third placed Fiorentina a 1-1 draw with midtable Foggia.

But there was goals galore for Sampdoria as Dutch master Ruud Gullit and England captain David Platt combined superbly to engineer a 5-0 thrashing of Cagliari.

Attilio Lombardo needed only eight minutes to get off the mark, and Sampdoria followed up with four more from Gullit, Platt, Roberto Mancini and 20-year-old Claudio Bellucci, the latter knocking home the rebound after Platt's header had hit the post.

Platt, playing in his favourite attacking midfield role, was outstanding. And his understanding with Gullit will make Sampdoria serious challengers when the Calcio restarts on January 8.

Inter Milan lost 2-0 at home to Lazio while struggling champions AC Milan drew 0-0 at AS Roma.

All the matches started 45 minutes late due to a protest by players over the Italian federation's delay in setting up a trust fund for injured players.

In France Nantes extended their unbeaten run to 21 matches thanks to goals from Japhet N'Doram and Emmanuel Rival.

N'Doram slotted home a superb cross from Nicolas Ouedec after 25 minutes and an own-goal by ex-Nantes player Rival in the second-half put the issue beyond doubt.

Nantes now have 45 points — four more than defending champions Paris St. Germain who snatched a 1-0 home victory over depleted Strasbourg thanks to a David Ginola penalty.

PSG are still struggling to reproduce their dazzling European Champions League form in the domestic league and Ginola's penalty, after Franck Leboeuf brought down Liberian striker George Weah, was all they had to show for 90 minutes territorial domination.

Nevertheless, the win meant they have now gone two years without losing at the Parc Des Princes.

Lyon stayed third after sharing a 0-0 draw with visiting Bastia.

Violence disfigures African finals

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Violence and a crowd trouble marred the weekend cup finals in Tunisia and Nigeria which brought the curtain down on a year of African club action.

The Champions' Cup clash between Esperance and Zamalek, which the Tunisians won 3-1, was held up after a dispute between the Egyptian goalkeeper and a photographer triggered a brawl.

Play also came to an abrupt halt following a disallowed goal in the all-Nigerian West African Football Union Cup decider in Jos.

Zamalek players, angered by slow service from the ball boys, kicked over advertising billboards early in the second half, which drew a hostile reaction from the capacity 50,000 crowd.

The clash of the Afro-Arab giants exploded soon after when Hussein Al Sayed of Zamalek clashed with the photographer after another long delay while the ball was retrieved.

It took Mauritian referee Lim Kee Chong five minutes to restore order as the deep rivalry between the teams surfaced and blows were exchanged.

"What happened was a disgrace to African football. It spoilt a wonderful day for us," Kenneth Malitoli, the Zambian-born Esperance forward, said later.

Ben Rekhissa, who had not scored in nine previous cup ties, was the Esperance hero, scoring in each half while captain Ali Ben Neji converted a penalty kick.

Defending champions Zamalek, virtually doomed after being held goalless in the first leg, snatched a late consolation goal from Efat Nassar.

Completing a memorable weekend for Tunisia, the national team beat Algeria 1-0 in Sfax through a goal from Nabil Bechaouch, who scored five times for his club last weekend.

Officials had to clear the filed of Plateau United supporters in the WAFU Cup showdown against holders Bendel Insurance.

Bendel, one goal ahead from the first leg on their own ground, doubled their advantage in the third minute when captain Roland Ewere burst through and scored a soft goal.

Althrough stunned by the setback, the huge home crowd roared on plateau and when the Senegalese referee disallowed what appeared to be an equalising goal, fans invaded the pitch.

Basketball Federation honours veterans today

'1995 to be the year of national teams'

By Aleen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With the Kingdom's basketball season officially concluded the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) will Tuesday honour the sport's sponsors and veterans in a first-of-its-kind season-ending reception at Al Hussein Sports City in Amman.

According to the JBF's secretary Ghaleb Balawi, five veterans who have served the game of basketball in different categories will be honoured annually at a season-ending award-giving ceremony.

"We initiated this idea this year, we will honour the first five chairman, secretaries, ladies in the JBF, referees, national coaches and sponsoring companies and individuals," Balawi Sunday told the Jordan Times.

"We appreciate the efforts of all these individuals, and each year there will be a new list going back to the earlier days of the sport in the country and ending with the present active members."

The reception will be held under the patronage of the speaker of the Lower House Sa'd Hayel Srour. Club presidents and members of other federations and concerned individuals have been invited.

The guests of honour include:

1) Former JBF chairmen: Abdullah Abu Nowwar, Mahmoud Shabsogh, Vahe Ghazarian, Ismail Dajani, and George Dakessian.

2) National team coaches: Tawfiq Shnoudi, Jalal Bustami, Suleiman Tobal, Mashour Qunash, Mohammad Kheir Mamser.

3) Retired referees: Saeed Omar, Reimon Zabaneh, Dhuhni Ra'fat, Fadi Khouri, and Mamdouh Khourma.

4) Former JBF secretaries: Nazmi Saeed, Mohammad Bazadogh, Bashir Faraj, Ghazi Bisheh, Mo'az Kheir.

5) Ladies: Salwa Mahshi, Hala Katbi, Suha Adeeb, Khunduf Hamdan, Lamia Haddad.

6) The Jordan International Athletes League.

7) Sponsors: Sabih Al Masri and Adel Abu khjeil.

8) Sponsoring companies: Opel-Skoda, Gulf Express, Aramex, Isam Ammari Co., Toyota, Zalloum Group, Oki Fax, Hyundai, Daihatsu, Mitsubishi, Citroen, National, Coca Cola, Dallah Group.

The 1994 competitions:

The basketball season concluded Thursday when Al Ahli beat Al Orthodoxi to retain their third consecutive basketball crown.

Al Ahli ended the competition with an unbeaten record, while Al Orthodoxi, which was this year represented by the younger lineup, finished second after losing to Al Ahli in both rounds 79-70 and 82-65.

Al Jazireh came in third after denying Al Jalil their former standing for the third consecutive year.

Al Jazireh were the only team to beat titleholders Al Ahli in a halftime score as they won the second half 42-32 in the match won by Al Ahli 77-65 thanks to a 45-23 lead in the first half.

Al Jalil, who played the second round without their coach who quit halfway through the competition, again finished fourth.

Al Watani hung on to their place in the division and pushed Al Hussein to the 2nd division on score difference after both teams tied in overall points. Al Hussein won their first encounter 79-76 while Al Watani won their second round match 84-68 to remain in fifth place.

Al Hussein were thus relegated for the first time since they joined the prestigious group in 1971 and accompanied Homentmen to the second division.

This year, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) amended the regulations, deciding that two teams will be relegated while only one team will be promoted reducing the number of competing teams to six for the first time as of 1995.

The usual eight competing teams were reduced to seven this season after the JBF last year promoted only one team from the second division instead of the usual two.

Al Jazireh captured the Under 22 and Under-14 tournaments.

Al Orthodoxi won the Under-16 and regained the women's title after titleholders Al Jazireh abruptly pulled out.

Al Ahli won the Under-18 and first division championship.

Al Abbasi won the second division competition and were promoted to the first division.

Among the most notable competitions which were scheduled but did not take place were the Jordan Cup and the women's second tournament.

National teams did not get their share of competition and training as the men's team was ruled out of the Asian Games delegation by the Jordan Olympic Committee while the women's team was due to have been regrouped but nothing has happened to this effect.

National teams to be regrouped soon

"1995 will be the year of national teams," the JBF's Balawi told the Jordan Times. "The Under-18 team has already been regrouped and are training in preparation for the Asian Youth Competition in the Philippines in March.

"We hope to regroup the men's team for the Asian Basketball Championship which will be held in Korea in July. The women's championship will also be held in the same month in Japan," he said.

Balawi noted that the main obstacle in preparing national teams was securing the necessary funding. "Total expenses for the three team's participation will amount to approximately JD 90,000," he added.

The JBF's competitions do not generate enough income as only the Ahli-Orthodoxi match is attended by a sizeable crowd and even then ticket sales would not amount to over JD 2000 which can hardly cover referee fees.

Portugal hit record 8 goals past Liechtenstein

LISBON (R) — Portugal broke their own goal scoring record as they crushed hapless Liechtenstein 8-0 in a European Championship Qualifier Sunday.

The Portuguese, who scored four goals in six minutes in the second half, now lead Group Six with 12 points from four wins in as many matches. Ireland, who also have a 100 percent record, are second with nine points from three games.

Porto striker Domingos Oliveira scored twice in the first 11 minutes and just before halftime Oceano Cruz increased the lead to a comfortable 3-0.

In the 57th minute a 20-metre shot from Joao Vieira Pinto put Portugal 4-0 ahead and between the 73rd and 79th minute Fernando Couto, Antonio Folha and Paulo Alves racked up four goals between them, with Alves scoring twice.

Liechtenstein barely got close to Portugal's net, but on the one occasion they threatened with their only corner of the match, they had the ball in the net. But the goal was disallowed because four players piled on top of keeper Vitor Baia.

Although he let in eight goals, Liechtenstein keeper Martin Hebb was his team's best player, making some magnificent saves including a penalty taken by Cruz in the 65th minute.

Portugal's previous record win in an official competition was 6-0 against Luxembourg in a World Cup qualifier in 1961.

Porto captain Joao Pinto also notched up a personal record, becoming Portugal's most capped player with 67 appearances.

Portugal were without defenders Helder Cristovao and Jose Tavares who were dropped after they had an argument on Friday night in the team's hotel.

Germany struggle home

In Kaiserslautern, Germany were whistled off the pitch by 20,000 disgruntled fans Sunday after an uninspiring 2-1 win over Albania in a European Championship qualifier.

Germany's match-winning trio of Jurgen Klinsmann, Ulf Kirsten and Lothar Matthaus — who scored one apiece in last Wednesday's 3-0 win over Moldova — engineered another victory in the first half.

Matthaus opened the scoring in the eighth minute from the penalty spot, after Albanian keeper Foto Strakosha had needlessly hauled down Kirsten in the area.

Klinsmann then headed home a Thomas Helmer cross.

But the 1990 World Cup winners badly lost their way in the second half against a side which realised it had nothing to lose.

Rraklli scored Albania's consolidation goal with a 20 metre drive in the 58th minute.

After beating Albania 2-1 in Tirana last month, German coach Berti Vogts now has three wins from three matches in Group 7.

But they are second in the table on goal difference behind Bulgaria, the team who sensationally knocked Germany out of this year's World Cup quarter-finals.

Amunike is Africa's No.1 footballer

CAIRO (AFP) — Nigerian striker Emmanuel Amunike was voted African Footballer of the Year 1994 by the ruling African Football Confederation Sunday.

Four of the top five in the poll were from Nigeria — the odd man out being joint runner-up George Weah, Paris St. Germain's star striker from Liberia.

1994 African Footballer of the Year

1. Emmanuel Amunike (Nigeria/Sporting Lisbon)
2. George Weah (Liberia/Paris St. Germain).
3. Rashidi Yekini (Nigeria/no club)
4. George Finidi (Nigeria/Ajax)
5. Daniel Amokachi (Nigeria/Everton)
6. Japhet N'Doram (Chad/Nantes)
7. Jorl Tiehi (Ivory Coast/Lens)
8. Augustine Okocha (Nigeria/Eintracht Frankfurt).

Alain Serge Magui (Ivory Coast/ASEC Abidjan)
Sundey Oliseh (Nigeria/Reggiana)
11. Anthony Yebboah (Ghana/Eintracht Frankfurt)
Abedi Pele (Ghana/Torino)
Aboubakar Camara Guinea/St Etienne)
Nourredine Naybet Morocco/Sporting Lisbon)
Mohamed Chaouch Morocco/Nice)

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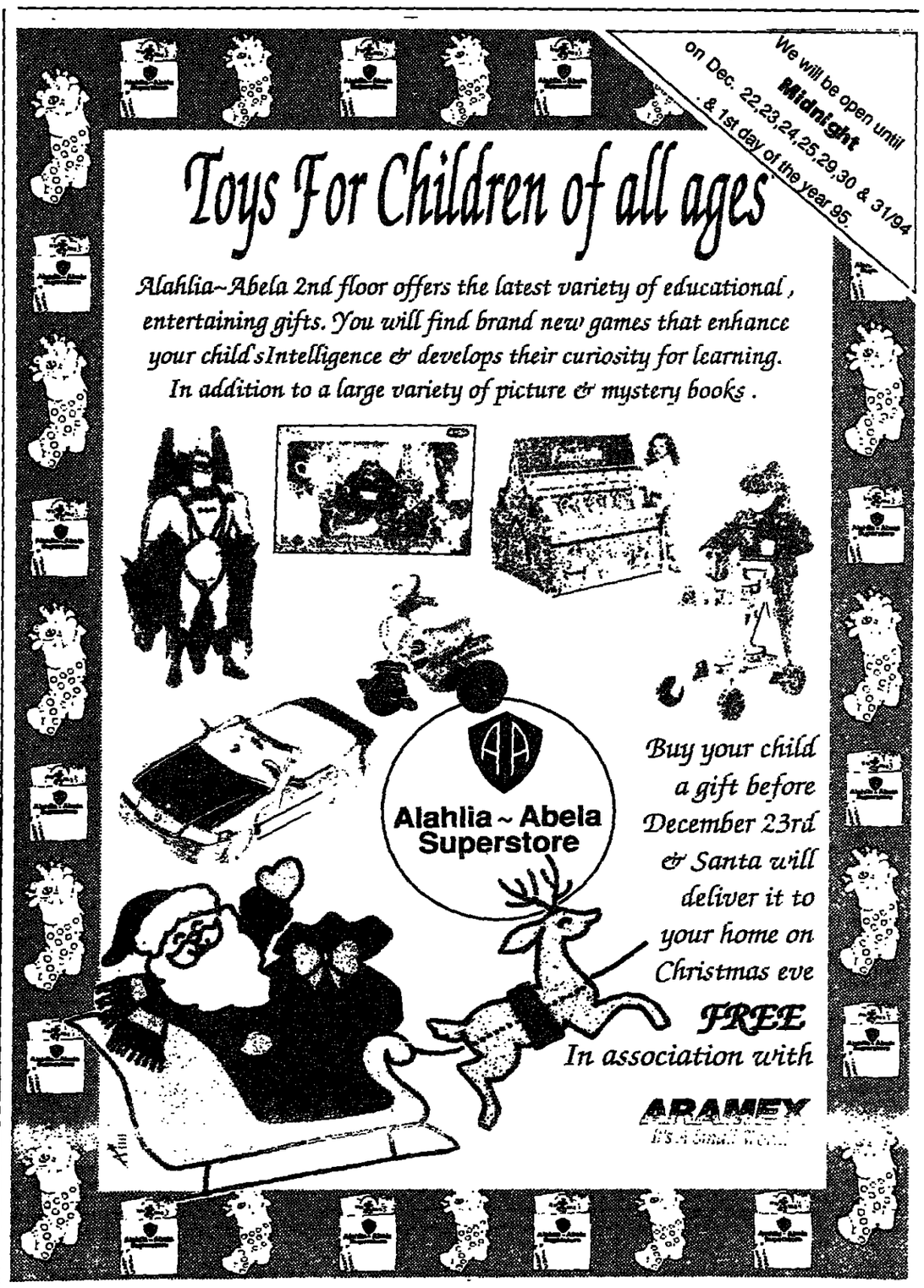

Israel promised Syria full pullout – Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli army officers met secretly with Syrian officials in Washington this month and told them Israel was ready to withdraw from most of the Golan Heights, Israeli opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday.

The Israelis also laid out the conditions under which they were prepared to pull all of the Israeli troops out of the Golan Heights, Mr. Netanyahu said.

"This is a policy that is the first step in withdrawing from all of the Golan and removing the Israeli tank force that effectively blocks a Syrian attack," Mr. Netanyahu told reporters after a meeting of the Knesset's foreign affairs and defence committee.

Mr. Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, said the meeting between Israeli officers and Syria's ambassador to Washington, Walid Muallem, took place within the past two weeks.

He said it was part of the government's attempt to conclude a peace agreement with Syria secretly in order to sidestep opposition in Israel and then to present the Israeli public with a finalised deal.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres did not deny the meeting described by Mr. Netanyahu took place.

But in response to questions by reporters about whether Israel gave the Syrians any maps or documents, he said: "He (Netanyahu) couldn't have seen any papers on withdrawal because such documents were not handed over."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said he was ready for a significant withdrawal on the Golan and the uprooting of Jewish settlements in exchange for peace with Syria.

Mr. Rabin has denied previous charges by Mr. Netanyahu that he had already committed Israel to a full withdrawal. Instead, Mr. Rabin said he offered a minimal pullout, followed by a three-year testing period of normalisation, after which a final line of withdrawal would be negotiated.

The Syrians want an Israeli pledge of complete withdrawal before the two sides negotiate a peace treaty.

Mr. Peres said Monday that even though formal negotiations have been suspended for months, both sides have kept in touch.

"We have never stopped the negotiations, neither did the Syrians stop them," Mr. Peres said. "Unfortunately, they are not being conducted in a manner that can produce pragmatic results in the forseeable future."

Israeli army radio reported Damascus has postponed this week's meeting in Washington between generals from Syria and Israel.

The meeting, which was put off for several days, was to accompany talks between the ambassador of both countries.

Mr. Rabin imposed a news blackout on the contacts, believing that leaks to the press had prompted Damascus to suspend them in the past, the radio said late Sunday.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad vowed Sunday that his country would not compromise on land to achieve peace with Israel.

"Syria wants a just and comprehensive peace on the decisions of international legality, but it will not make concessions on land and rights," Mr. Assad told a delegation of Arab lawyers.

"There are attempts and pressure exerted on our nation's morale...Syria cannot approve any step that harms our national security," Mr. Assad said.

His Majesty King Hussein on Monday receives former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (Petra photo)

Nyerere praises Jordan's moves

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday received at the Royal Court former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, who is on a private visit to Jordan, and exchanged views with him on several regional and international issues.

Mr. Nyerere voiced pride and appreciation of the relations between him and King Hussein and commended the King's policies aimed at eliminating the repercussions of crises in the Middle East.

He also lauded the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, stressing that the treaty should be a basis for signing other treaties between Israel and the other Arab parties to the peace process.

Volunteers signing up to fight in Chechenya, support committee says

By Cathy King
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Volunteers are signing up to join the forces of Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev to fight the Russian intervention in the republic, Deputy Toujan Faisal said Monday.

"Mostly young men are volunteering and have been registering with us. We are waiting and if need be they will go. Maybe they themselves will decide to go without approval," Ms. Faisal told a press conference.

Ms. Faisal, who is of Circassian descent, is acting as spokesperson of the Chechen community in Jordan.

Addressing the press conference, called by the Jordanian Committee for the Support of the Independent Caucasian Chechen Republic (JCSCP), Ms. Faisal said that the committee had begun collecting humanitarian aid but had been awaiting official permission to send their contributions to the beleaguered Chechen Republic.

"We have arranged routes for sending medicine and other aid through the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and the Red Crescent and we received official permission to release what we have collected this morning," said Ms. Faisal.

Asked whether the Chechen community was considering sending military support for the people of the Chechen Republic, Ms. Faisal said: "Military backing requires a state decision. So, no, we are not offering military aid, just humanitarian."

She added that the Jordanian government was unanimous in its support for the independence of Chechenya. The government has not issued a formal statement on the crisis in Chechenya.

Recent reports from within the breakaway republic, the independence of which was unanimously ratified by the Chechen-Ingush republic's parliament on Nov. 27, 1990, have alleged Russian use of banned warfare substances against the Chechens.

"We call upon the international community to intervene and to send a fact-finding mission to investigate reports of Russian use of napalm, cluster bombs and gas," Ms. Faisal said, adding that there had also been renewed fears of deportations, a form of "ethnic cleansing."

Mass deportations of the people of the Caucasus characterised the communist era and fears of a repetition of such a course of events are strong among the Chechens.

"For almost 300 years the Caucasus region has resisted occupation and oppression under tsarist and communist Russia, but the lengthy duration of such policies does not make present intervention in the internal affairs of the Chechen Republic right," said Ms. Faisal.

The republic's strategic position, richness in natural resources and the Russian Federation's internal problems have provoked the invasion, she added.

JCSCP head and former Minister of Public Works Said Beano told the press conference: "We contest the Russian claim that Chechenya is an internal matter of the federation of Russia and an integral part of it."

He recalled that the republic was established in March 1990 following a conference in Grozny and that the Chechen people declined to join the Russian Federation in March 1992.

Russian military threats against the republic, Mr. Beano said, could lead to the expansion of hostilities throughout the Caucasus region.

By late Monday, Russian troops had sealed the last entrance to the capital Grozny which they have besieged since Sunday, reports said.

Gur says self-rule deal is distant

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) are still a long way from an accord on extending Palestinian self-rule on the occupied West Bank, Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur said Monday.

Speaking during a visit to the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim near Jerusalem, Mr. Gur told reporters: "We are still very far from being in a position to sign an accord."

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Israel was trying to reconcile security requirements with the need to hold Palestinian elections.

Autonomy talks were postponed indefinitely last week following disagreements over a planned army redeployment on the West Bank ahead of elections.

Under the declaration of principles on autonomy signed in Washington last September, Israeli troops are to pull out of West Bank towns by the eve of elections, which should have been held in July.

But Israel has been increasingly reluctant to commit itself to a redeployment following the killings of 45 Israelis since the start of self-rule in May.

Mr Peres said Monday that Israel "does not intend to change the declaration of principles unilaterally, but is wary of carrying out the planned redeployment of its military forces because the Palestinian Authority has not managed to rein in terrorism."

He said Israel was trying to "find a way to hold the elections without harming our security."

He was speaking after talks with Armenian Foreign Minister Vahan Papazian in occupied Jerusalem.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat are expected to hold talks soon in a bid to break the impasse, officials said, but no date has been set.

A PLO official who demanded anonymity said Mr. Arafat would tell Mr. Rabin that delay in implementing the agreement for withdrawal and elections might lead to the collapse of the whole peace process.

"The chairman will make it clear to Mr. Rabin that the Israeli offer is a clear violation of the declaration of principles and will only lead to the paralysing of the whole process," said the official.

The meeting is to take place on Wedensday at the Erez border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

An Israeli official who demanded anonymity said a meeting was expected to take place this week but no day had been agreed.

Mr. Gur said Monday Israel was still concerned about security within Gaza and Jericho, areas already under control of the Palestinian self-rule authority.

"Right now we (are) negotiating the many points ... some of them the continuation of the (Gaza-Jericho) agreement in Cairo and some of them new ones, especially concerning the elections and the pre-deployment," Mr. Gur said.

Mr. Peres' office said in a statement: "Israel is concerned about redeploying its troops because the PLO has

(Contined on page 7)

COLUMN

France's Abbe Pierre leads homeless revolt

PARIS (R) — France's Abbe Pierre, a Roman Catholic priest who campaigns in defence of poor people, squatted a building in central Paris Sunday to launch a winter offensive for the homeless. Some 300 militants of the Right to Housing (DAL) Association, backed by the 81-year-old priest, occupied a block of flats in the fashionable St Germain-Des-Pres district on the River Seine's left bank. "We have decided not to lower ourselves any longer by making our calls for help to the Paris Town Hall. "That's why we've decided, in the name of the 'law of necessity' which overrules all other laws, to occupy this empty site which can house 60 families," Abbe Pierre told reporters. He was received by conservative Prime Minister Edouard Balladur at his nearby office later Sunday. French media reported Mr. Balladur pledged that the occupiers would not be forced out by police before a court rules on their gesture. French Defence Minister Francois Leotard, in an interview with RTL Radio, said he did not want to justify illegal acts but added that "in some cases, a strong act is necessary." Dubbed the Mother Teresa of Paris, Abbe Pierre founded a chain of hostels for the homeless in 1949 which now covers 32 countries and shelters 3,500 people in France alone. The DAL organisation estimates that up to 600,000 people are homeless in France.

U.K. MP lodges press complaint over lottery win

LONDON (R) — A senior member of parliament said he was referring two newspapers to Britain's press watchdog for naming an Asian migrant winner of a $17.8 million ($27.82 million) lottery who asked to remain anonymous. Opposition Labour Party Home Affairs spokesman Jack Straw said he would lodge his complaint with the press complaints commission Monday and warned that newspapers were risking having tough privacy laws imposed on them. The tabloid News Of The World named the winner and his wife and splashed their photograph across its front page Sunday. It was defiant about ignoring the winner's decision to demand privacy, to which he is entitled under lottery rules. "This story is not an intrusion into private grief, but a celebration of public joy," the newspaper said. Britain's high court Wednesday allowed newspapers to name the winner, a Muslim immigrant hunted down by tabloids even though he required anonymity from the lottery organisers. But after overturning the injunction taken out by lottery organisers Camelot, tabloid newspaper editors decided not to reveal who the mystery man was. A regional newspaper, the Yorkshire on Sunday, also named the winner, arguing that publicity made sure there was no fraud. Mr. Straw, also MP for the area where the winner lives, said the News Of The World's justification was "the flimsiest and most cynical excuse ever." Conservative MP Peter Bottomley, echoing the criticism, called on readers to boycott the newspapers.

Taiwan council speaker arrested for murder

TAIPEI (AFP) — A ruling Nationalist Party (KMT) local council speaker has been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the murder of a Taiwanese entertainment tycoon, a prosecutor said Monday. Cheng Tai-Chi, 36, speaker of the Pingtung County Council in southern Taiwan, is the first KMT speaker to be arrested as a murder suspect. Prosecutor Tsai Cheng-Lin said by telephone that his department had decided to arrest and detain Mr Cheng Sunday to prevent any possible collusion with others in fabricating testimony concerning the case. Chung Yuan-Fang, chairman of the Hollywood Karaoke TV in Chaochou township, Pingtung County, was gunned down in front of his home on Dec. 13. Eighteen bullet wounds were found on his body.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Security forces foil bid to kill Mubarak

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian security forces foiled a bid by Islamic militants to kill President Hosni Mubarak when they rounded up suspects accused of involvement in an attack on author Naguib Mahfouz, judicial officials said here Monday. One of those detained, Mohammad Al Mahallawi, told military prosecutors that the outlawed Gamaa Islamiyah fundamentalist group planned to fire rockets at the presidential motorcade from a shop they were to rent near Mr. Mubarak's residence. Mr. Mahallawi said he had joined a group of militants who had started negotiating terms for renting the shop while another group was responsible for obtaining the rockets and explosives. The plot was scuppered when one of the militants in charge of planning it was arrested. Mr. Mahallawi is among 16 militants on trial for the attempted murder of Nobel prize-winning Mahfouz, who was stabbed in the neck outside his Cairo home on Oct. 14. "An alternative plan to assassinate the Egyptian president had been drawn up," Mr. Mahallawi told the prosecutors. "It involved a six-man suicide attack on President Mubarak's motorcade." Police said Mr. Mahallawi was a close associate of the Jamaa's former military chief Talaat Yassin Hammam, who was shot dead by police in April.

Iran road accident kills 33

TEHRAN (R) — Thirty-three people were killed in western Iran in a collision between a truck and a minibus carrying students from a teacher training college, Iranian Television said on Monday. The male students usually commuted to the college in Aligudarz 300 kilometres southwest of Tehran in two minibuses, but one was broken down on Sunday and they all travelled in the other which was involved in the crash, it said. Tehran's Hamshahri newspaper said the drivers of both vehicles were among those killed. Nine students were injured.

Orthodox Jews can listen to transsexual's hits

TEL AVIV (AFP) — One of Israel's chief rabbis has authorised ultra-orthodox Jews to listen to hits by a transsexual singer. Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi Doron said that before having the sex-change operation the singer, Dana International, was a man and it was therefore permitted to listen to Dana's songs "provided you know about her previous state." According to strict orthodox tradition, Jews are not allowed to listen to a woman's voice, because it is deemed to be too sensual. Rabbi Doron said problems would arise if the singer was found to have been originally a hermaphrodite. Dana International, who is of Yemeni origin, topped the Israeli pop charts with the hit song Saida Sultana. She sings it in a mixture of Arabic, Hebrew and English. The singer is also popular in Turkey and Egypt, where Islamic fundamentalists have accused her of trying to pervert young people.

Cypriot primate to have treatment in London

NICOSIA (AP) — Archbishop Chrysostomos, primate of the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyrpus, is to be flown to London for heart treatment, his doctor said Monday. Mr. Chrysostomos, 67, was admitted to the Nicosia general hospital Saturday following a "slight indispostition," said Costas Zambartas, a heart specialist. He said that a checkup indicated the archbishop has a narrowing in his coronary artery and will be flown to London for a widening through the balloon method. The primate's condition gives no cause for concern, Mr. Zambartas stressed. He did not say when the primate will go to London.

Villagers unmask charlatan sheikh

CAIRO (AFP) — A woman managed to pose for 15 years as a village sheikh who performed miracles before being unmasked and arrested, the government daily Al Gumhuriya reported Monday. Residents of Atssa, a village some 100 kilometres south of Cairo, turned to "Sheikh Shoukri" for help in making their wishes come true. The sheikh was believed to be able to separate a husband from his second wife or make a sterile woman fertile, the paper said. But this week villagers discovered that the sheikh was in fact a woman, Khazna Mouftah, who had fooled them to extort money.

Sudanese and Ugandan rebels clash

KAMPALA (AFP) — Some 18 people were killed in a battle pitting Sudanese rebels against Ugandan insurgents in southern Sudan last week, Uganda's official New Vision newspaper reported Monday. Twelve fighters belonging to Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) were killed when their camp at Gong in Sudan's Eastern Equitoria province was attacked by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which lost six men in the battle. Groups of LRA fighters have fled from northern Uganda and entered southern Sudan in recent months following a series of offensives against them by Ugandan government troops. Uganda has accused the Sudanese government of backing the LRA which has been fighting from bases in northern Uganda for the past couple of years in a bid to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni.

Sfeir lambasts Lebanese politics

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's leading churchman has said the country's political establishment is riddled with "worms" and incapable of replacing them with trustworthy and competent people.

Adding his voice to nationwide anger over revelations of corruption in high places, Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir said the system was unable to reform itself or resolve a social crisis afflicting the country.

Lebanon's political establishment has been shaken by charges of drug dealing, tax dodging and bribery. Members of parliament (MPs), an ex-prime minister, an ex-speaker of parliament, a government minister, billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri and a son of President Elias Hrawi have all been accused in the past month.

Mr. Sfeir, who heads Lebanon's Maronite church, said the Lebanese would one day revolt and change the Syrian-backed political system in force since the 1975-90 civil war.

He told a delegation of Sunday visitors there was popular discontent over low wages, high taxes, lack of social services and poor but costly education.

Lacking healthy democratic expression, Lebanon was unable to make the smallest political reform or "to eliminate all the worms and replace them with trustworthy and capable people," Mr. Sfeir told visitors from the Shouf mountains.

The root of Lebanon's ills was "the flaws in our political system which must be examined to see how it should be applied, so that when our national will revolts there will be no chains binding it," Mr. Sfeir said.

This appeared to be a thinly veiled reference to the fact that all post-war governments have been backed by Syria, which has 35,000 soldiers in Lebanon, and that politicians refer all problems to Damascus for settlement by Syrian leaders.

Many Christians feel they have been shoved aside since the civil war and question Syria's motives. Most Christian political leaders are in exile, but Mr. Sfeir remains a prominent critic.

Lebanon's Catholic patriarchs and bishops also lashed out at the weekend against political corruption in a statement after their annual conference.

They denounced "political manoeuvres and scandals which damage the prestigae of the state and the credibility of the authorities and the country's reputation regionally and internationally."

The Catholic prelates urged authorities to reform the administration and assure basic services such as employment, housing, education and medical care to the poor suffering from an acute economic crisis.

Aideed: No U.S. forces needed

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Somali warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed Monday said he saw no need for U.S. combat troops to protect the withdrawal of U.N. forces here, but made no threats against the 3,000 U.S. soldiers expected to return to Mogadishu for the pullout.

"I don't see any reason why extra troops are to be deployed, I don't see any need for this action," General Aideed told a visiting Arab League mission, noting that he had pledged the departure of the U.N. troops would be peaceful.

His foreign affairs adviser Mohammad Hassan Awale was more forthright, however. "We won't sit around drinking tea waiting for them," he said. "What the hell are they going to do here?"

An official of the U.N. Operation in Somalia, which combines both military and civilian personnel, characterised Gen. Aideed's comments as "clear and peacefully worded according to his standards."

U.S. President Bill Clinton promised the return of the American soldiers Friday, with Deputy Defence Secretary John Deutch saying the 13,000 or so U.N. troops still in the lawless Horn of Africa country faced a "hostile environment" and that the covering troops would use overwhelming force if need be.

The U.N. troops are due to pull out by March 31 following the failure of Gen. Aideed and his principal rival, self-styled President Ali Mahdi Mohammad, to agree on a government of national unity.

U.S. troops arrived here in December 1992, their mission to avert massive famine and protect relief convoys in this dangerous country wracked by clan warfare since the ousting of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in January 1991.

They put a price of $25,000 on Gen. Aideed's head and spent months trying to track him down after the United Nations accused the warlord of responsibility for the deaths of 23 Pakistani troops in June last year.

Hundreds of Somalis died during the manhunt for Gen. Aideed, which ended in October 1993 when 18 soldiers of an elite U.S. unit were killed and 75 wounded in savage battles with the warlord's militias.

U.S. television showed pictures of corpses of U.S. servicemen being dragged through the streets, and the U.S. soldiers pulled out in March this year after losing a total of 36 men.

Turkish human rights leaders on trial

ANKARA (R) — Turkey opened the trial of two human right activists and resumed the trial of four others on separatism charges on Monday, less than two weeks after prison sentences for eight Kurdish members of Parliament (MPs) drew Western condemnation.

The trials of the six Turkish activists have drawn the wrath of human rights groups and lawyers, who say Turkey is hardening rather than softening against criticism.

"I see more severity in legal bodies almost parallel to, and maybe in defiance of, a softening of public attitude and the criticism in Europe," said [illegible] lawyer for both the [illegible] and main defender of the Kurdish MPs.

The jail sentences of up to 15 years against the MPs caused an outcry in Europe and damaged Turkey's efforts to a customs union with the European Union.

Mr. Alatas said judges and prosecutors saw themselves as the only defender of the state and felt personally hurt by the growing public criticism of their decision.

"So, rather than wonder why their decision is criticised, they create such meaningless trials," Mr. Alatas said.

In the trials, the heads of Turkey's two main human rights groups and four activists were accused of spreading separatist propaganda through booklets on alleged torture and the torching of villages in the country's mainly-Kurdish southeast.

[illegible] including Yavuz, [illegible] the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), and Akin Birdal, chairman of the Human Rights Association (IHD), were charged under Turkey's notorious anti-terror law, which has caused scores of intellectuals to be sentenced for work on the Kurdish issue.

"The trial is a bit of a surprise for us," Mr. Onen told Reuters. "We should be appearing as witnesses for the many human rights abuses, and not as defendents accused of a crime for which there is not base."

Prosecutor Nuh Cetinkaya recommended Sedat Aslantas, author of the IHD book "A Look at Torched Villages," be sentenced to three years, and Mr. Birdal and IHD General Secretary Husnu Ondul to six months. He asked for board member Eral Anar to be acquitted.

Mr. Aslantas had just begun serving another three-[illegible] for a speech in 1992 which was deemed separatist.

A decision is expected on Dec. 29 on the trial

Mr. Onen and board member Fevzi Argun appeared at their first court hearing, in which they were accused of aiming to "damage the integrity of the state" by publishing a booklet reviewing 14 years of alleged torture in Turkey.

They were charged last month because three paragraphs in their torture booklet criticised Turkey's approach to its Kurdish minority.

Their trial is expected to end on Jan. 11. Both men could face jail sentences of up to five years plus a fine of up to $2.6 million.

The Human Rights Watch Helsinki sent a letter to Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on Saturday, calling the trial "another clear attack on the principle of free speech, which lies at the heart of the rule of law, human rights and liberal democracy."

The IHD said on Monday three lawyers were arrested, pending trial, on Dec. 16 in the southeastern town of Diyarbakir for a book the group published in November.